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ABSTRACT

Written for preschool educators, this paper discusses the evaluation of the Craigroyston Community High School Under-Fives Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was intended that the report be accessible to anyone involved in center-based work with preschool children and their families. It was assumed that an explanation of evaluation procedures used might be helpful to external evaluators or project team members uncertain about the nature of an external evaluator's role. Part I describes the background to the evaluation. The first chapter in Part I provides a brief introduction to some alternative models and styles of evaluation drawn from the theoretical literature. The second chapter outlines the context of the evaluation: the general idea of the community school, the nature of the Craigroyston Curriculum Project, and the rationale and strategies involved in the Under-Fives study. Part II presents the evaluation report itself, which consists of sections on background, the program and participants, process and perceptions, analysis and evaluation of center characteristics, and conclusions and recommendations. A brief postscript raises central questions likely to be relevant to the evaluation of community-oriented projects in many different settings. (RH)

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Occasional Paper no. 3

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Evaluation in Action: a case study of an under-fives centre in Scotland

Joyce Watt

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Occasional Paper no. 3

Evaluation in Action: a case study of an under-fives centre in Scotland

Joyce Watt

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About the author

Dr Joyce Watt is a former primary school teacher and lecturer at a college of education. She is now Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. She has also been a visiting lecturer at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Her main professional interests are in early childhood education, educational disadvantage, and the continuing education of adults, including professionals. In the early 1970s she was director of one of the United Kingdom's first research projects in Educational Priority Areas. Since then she has undertaken research contracts in a number of areas including inter-agency cooperation in early education, community schools, Scottish policy for the educationally disadvantaged, and continuity between pre-school and primary school provision. She is currently a member of the action-research team for the 'Young Families Now' project which is supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and is based in Aberdeen.

Occasional Papers

The Occasional Papers series addresses issues of major importance to policy makers, practitioners and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in industrial and developing societies.

CONTENTS

Foreword 1
Author's Preface 4

Part I The context

1. Evaluation: what are we looking for 7
2. The context and the process 17
References (Part I) 28

Part II The Evaluation Report:
Craigrayston Community High School

Acknowledgements 30

1. The background 31
2. The programme and the people 47
3. Process and perceptions 60
4. Analysis 83
5. Conclusions and recommendations 104

Appendices 118
References (Part II) 119
Postscript 121

FOREWORD

Community workers, project leaders (indeed, anyone who has ever been involved in work with families) rightly complain that evaluation too often focuses on statistics; on the measurable at the expense of the relevant. That is not the case in this lucid evaluation of the Craigroyston Community High School Under-Fives Centre in Edinburgh by Joyce Watt – a project funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation between 1981 and 1987.

In presenting an evaluation report in this format, the Foundation is aiming to give a wider audience the unusual privilege of peering over the researcher's shoulder. Unusual in a number of ways. There are few academics who, while retaining all the rigour and detachment that external evaluation demands, can at the same time capture the essential 'feel' of an innovative project – the qualitative aspect of community work. Anyone who can observe that 'the dolls, too, have started another week' or that, after swimming, it was 'back to the Centre for a baked potato'; or who records, movingly, the lack of confidence shown by many of the mothers, displays a sympathy for the spirit, as well as the structure, of the project.

But the figures do matter, and here, Dr Watt's study is an enlightening example of dualism. For while she admits that it inevitably focuses on those who 'judging by their record of attendance, seemed to get a lot out of using the Centre', she also recognises that there was a second 'shadow' audience of parents who made little or no use of the project.

Undoubtedly, many mothers gained considerably

through the dedicated efforts of the Centre's staff. Indeed, this report suggests that those who were most strongly committed to its activities claimed that the Centre had helped them to readjust their own perceived world; to change their personal agendas. There is, however, also the suggestion – which many other studies would bear out – that these mothers were, in some way, 'ready' for the experiment: that the centre provided them with the challenge for which they were seeking. Many other mothers were **not** ready for it; for them, the Centre therefore remained marginal.

What was it, in the lives of those who made most use of this innovative project, that enabled them to do so? And how might the project have attempted to build up the ego-strength of those who remained on the margin of its work? These are only two of the questions which this study raises, and in addressing them, Dr. Watt plucks out an important contemporary theme. 'If pre-school education can, in any way, help children and adults cope with stress and its effects, this might well turn out to be one of the most fundamental contributions which pre-school education might make.'

This echoes the current interest in concepts like the 'resilient' child; of working with the entire 'ecology of childhood', as Bronfenbrenner put it; of seeing early childhood care and education as, above all, a crucial period for shaping, supporting and enhancing relationships, not only between parents and children, but with the community at large.

That, in turn, begins to redefine the Foundation's evaluation programmes themselves. The outcome of the work reported here therefore spills over, partly into developing new theory, and partly in redefining future work. As such, this paper is an illustration of how creative evaluation (and it is essentially a creative process) of a field project can draw attention to, and extract lessons from, not only the data it has gathered, but its obverse as well: to look at, not only those who plainly benefitted, but to ask also about those who spurned it. That does not mean it is a prototype which

has to be slavishly followed in subsequent studies. Quite the reverse. It emphasises that evaluation can be a rich seam of enlightenment if – and perhaps **only** if – the evaluator addresses the main underlying issues of a project; makes them visible, and gathers **relevant** data to illustrate them and to draw conclusions which link with the literature.

Putting these strands together, there is much to learn from this deceptively modest study.

Bernard van Leer Foundation
The Hague

Every project supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation involves action which is broadly aimed at improving the educational and developmental chances of young children through their families and communities. That action must be evaluated as it proceeds. Some of the obvious questions which must be answered as part of the continuing process of development are: what is being achieved? why do particular innovations succeed or fail? what (if any) are the measurable changes? how should the action be adapted in the light of what has been learned?

Most project teams will also want to evaluate the 'outcomes' of their work as the project nears its conclusion. The same broad questions will be asked but, at this stage, it is hoped that the evaluation will have relevance not only for the immediate project but also for those involved in similar work elsewhere. Evaluation, then, is part of the fabric of every worthwhile project: an evaluation programme is an integral part of the responsibility of every project team.

It may be, however, that the project team will want to complement their own strategies by involving external evaluators either from the beginning, as part of the continuing work of the project, or near the end when the programme as a whole can be evaluated. At whatever stage external evaluators are brought in, their task is to complement the work of the team; their particular contribution is not that they necessarily bring different skills but that they bring a different perspective to the project from 'outside'.

The present paper is written from the perspective of an external evaluator. In 1985 I accepted an invitation

from the project director of the Craigroyston Curriculum Project in Edinburgh, on behalf of the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Lothian Regional Council, the project's sponsors, to undertake an evaluation of its Under-Fives Centre which, by that stage, had been in operation for four years. The report of that evaluation, written as a case study of the Centre, was submitted in 1986.

In 1987, the Bernard van Leer Foundation decided to publish that report and asked me to add an introduction explaining some of the principles on which the evaluation was based as well as the choices open to me as an external evaluator. There were two aims. First, that the evaluation report itself might be useful to anyone involved in similar work with pre-school children and their families; and second, that an explanation of the evaluation procedures used might be helpful to other external evaluators or to project teams uncertain about what the role of an external evaluator might be.

The present paper is therefore in two parts. Part I is the explanation of the background to the evaluation: chapter one is a brief introduction to some of the alternative models and styles of evaluation from the theoretical literature. Chapter two outlines the context of the particular evaluation: first the general idea of the community school and specifically the Craigroyston Curriculum Project; and second an explanation of the rationale and strategies involved in the Under-Fives study. Part II is the evaluation report itself, reprinted largely in its original form. Finally there is a Postscript which is deliberately brief, intended only to raise two general but central questions which are likely to be relevant to the evaluation of community-oriented projects in many different settings.

It will be clear to the reader that the evaluation depicted here, like most of its kind, is the result of many compromises between the 'ideal' and the 'possible'. The study is offered to project workers and potential external evaluators in that spirit, as an

example, not as a model. Given that no two evaluations can or should be the same anyway, that is a statement of principle as well as reflection of fact.

Jowce Watt
Aberdeen
January 1988

12

PART I THE CONTEXT

1. EVALUATION: WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Aims and limitations

The title of this first chapter is deliberately ambiguous. On the narrower interpretation it might mean 'what should we be evaluating?'; on the other it might mean 'what is evaluation for and how much can we reasonably expect from it?' Both interpretations pose important questions. We start with the latter.

The external evaluations of community-based projects with which we are concerned here, generally have an 'internal' audience – these involved in the work of the project itself – and three broad and often overlapping 'external' audiences. First are the funders or sponsors of the project who must have an interest in its 'efficiency' and accountability, in terms not only of outcomes but also the innovatory processes the project has promoted and the new questions it has raised. Second are the decision/policy-makers both internal and external to the project itself, who will be concerned with changes which should be made in the programme. Third are the outside observers who may look to the evaluation of a community-oriented project either for some practical insight into their own broadly similar work, or some theoretical insight into an aspect of social science.

What all these audiences have in common is that they look to the evaluation as a tool for their own broad decision-making purposes: whether to continue to fund the programme or disseminate its findings to other similar programmes; whether or how to change the programme; whether to use the experience of the programme to extend skills or refine knowledge. In a liberal democratic society where, at least in principle, change evolves in the light of considered judgment, evaluation can be a powerful tool in that process.

It is essential, however, not to expect too much of evaluation studies. They do not provide 'conclusions', far less definitive 'answers', since all judgments are made in the light of particular cultural and personal value systems. The more structured the evaluation design, and the greater the emphasis on quantitative data, the more tempting it may be to look for 'answers'. That however is not the role of evaluation. Even its strongest advocates warn against unrealistic expectations. House (1980) for example, warns that 'Expecting evaluation to provide compelling and necessary conclusions hopes for more than evaluation can deliver'. Cooper (1976) cautions that 'Evaluation will not make our difficult decision for us; it is a servant, not a master'. Cronbach (1980) argues that the most important effect of evaluation research may simply be in 'stimulating a discussion that leads to gradual change in prevailing views'; while Holt (1981) is content to see it simply as 'a form of reassurance'.

What then should we be looking for from evaluation studies? Increased insight and understanding, new interpretations of familiar ideas, a contribution to the debate on the direction of evolutionary change – no more.

Approaches, models and styles: the choice

The approach, model and style of any specific evaluation will be determined by particular circumstances as well as the theoretical bias of those most closely involved. The range and nature of possible choices is very complex and it is not possible to do justice to that complexity here. Major typologies of evaluation models, however, commonly reflect the following key questions where decisions and choices will have to be made: should the emphasis be on formative or summative evaluation? That is to say, is the principle objective to influence the direction which the programme is taking and help to form it, or to present a report at the end of the programme which will, in effect, give an overview? Should the evaluation be descriptive or judgmental, holistic or analytic, internal or external (Lawton 1980)? At another level,

House (1980) outlines a different but complementary range of possibilities:

- should the evaluation aim at a thorough analysis of all the structural elements of the programme and an assessment of their impact and efficiency?
- should the evaluation be based on the programme's initial objectives or might there even be a case for the evaluator being unaware of them?
- should the evaluation be geared to any decisions which will have to be made from it?
- if the evaluator is an acknowledged authority in the field can he/she not simply be trusted to apply legitimate criteria from a background of experience?
- should the evaluator stand 'outside' the programme or try to get 'inside' by depicting it through the eyes of its participants and those most familiar with it as in the case study model?

On the basis of these and other questions, House builds up a typology of eight evaluation models for discussion.

Questions of style

Questions of model lead directly to questions of style. All models are based on designs which depend to a greater or lesser degree on the collection of empirical data, but the nature of those data may be very different. The tighter the research design and the nearer it comes to the classic experimental model, the more it will depend on measurements, quantification and statistical analysis. The 'systems analysis' and 'behavioural objectives' models closely identified with the evaluation of USA pre-school poverty programmes of the 1960s and 1970s (Cicerelli *et al* 1969, Bloom *et al* 1971, Stanley 1972) are likely to follow this style. On the other hand, more open models of evaluation, such as the 'case study' model are clearly based on the interpretative illuminative style with its emphasis on a wide variety of data collection, particularly participant observation, and interviews with those most closely involved in the programme.

It is tempting but dangerous to polarise the debate between quantitative and qualitative styles of evaluation. The quantitative style clearly appeals to policy-makers and those who put their faith in 'objective' data to provide 'hard' evidence on which to generalise from the findings of any one programme and predict likely outcomes for similar programmes in different settings. The qualitative style appeals to those who emphasise the importance of the total dynamic nature of any programme and who argue that the results of the empirical testing of selected aspects of a programme, if taken in isolation, not only deny the complexity of the work, but can even be misleading. The latter will argue that any social science research which cannot capture the dynamic nature of projects and events will fail since it is 'doomed to reflect only that which stood still long enough to be measured' (Rist 1984).

It is easy to find references in the literature which seem to polarise the debate. Parlett and Hamilton (1972), for example, maintain that '(Objective models) led to studies that are artificial and restricted in scope', while Weiss (1972) argues that the evaluator owes the organisation which has commissioned him 'a report of unqualified objectivity'. And while many would seem to acknowledge the legitimacy of some elements of both styles, their own bias is clearly there. Cooley and Lohnes (1976) for example, while agreeing that an evaluation can only have credibility if its values and assumptions are made explicit, at the same time argues for those values to be empirically tested. And House (1980) puts quantification firmly in its place.

> 'Good insights are often derived from quantitative studies but they normally result from the analyst making the right intuitive judgements rather than the right calculation.'

All this, however, may be highly misleading. While clearly there is a major theoretical debate here, and while there are still those who take extreme positions, it is now generally recognised that both quantitative

and qualitative styles are useful according to the purpose of the particular study, and they may also often complement each other within the same programme. Few today would argue the validity of complete objectivity in evaluation and would agree with Finch (1986) that '... the evaluator has to make decisions about what information will be of most use and how to obtain it and taking those decisions commits him or her to a political stance on issues of educational change.' And those whose bias is towards illuminative evaluation and qualitative data accept the role of quantitative data within that model. Parlett and Hamilton (1972) indeed always saw tests and questionnaires having a place alongside observation, interviews and documentary evidence in their methodology; and contemporary writers of the 'qualitative research' school argue that if it is to overcome its weaknesses not only must it make its methodology explicit and open to scrutiny, it must also incorporate quantitative data.

This then has been a brief introduction to some of the alternative models and styles of evaluation. Even in such a brief introduction it is clear that the choices for the evaluator are many – and they are not simple choices.

Negotiation, contract and process

Thechoice of approch, model and style will inevitably affect all otuer decisions about the process and procedures of the evaluation and the role the evaluatoe plays. Consequently, a discussion of these choices at the broadest level will be the first stage of any evaluation – a negotiation between the programme sponsors, the team (and possibly the participants), and the evaluator. If any party has strong bias to a particular approach, model or style which is incompatible with the priorities of the other, this should be made clear immediately and the impossibility of any 'partnership' recognised.

This initial negotiation will involve all parties in coming to terms with whether or how the evaluation

can proceed. From the point of view of the evaluator he/sh needs time to explore the viability of an evaluation. According to Rutman (1984) important preliminaries are: reading relevant documents, talking with the programme managers, exploring the field, deciding on the key questions and the information needed to answer them, determining the feasibility of particular evaluation procedures. He/she must also be clear who constitutes the major for the evaluation. Having determined the broad plan and decided that the evaluation is feasible the evaluator must then return to the programme sponsors and/or participants for a second stage of negotiation.
Agreement must be reached on several crucial question:

- is the evaluation plan acceptable or must be adapted?
- what access will the evaluator be given to the programme and its participants?
- how confidentional will the data be?
- what resources will be made available?
- must the evaluaor negotiate the final report with programmme sponsors and/or participants and,if so, whose perspective carries most wight? Have the sponsors for example, the right to insist on changes to the final report or do participants have the right to include alternative versions of particular sections?
- - Who 'owns' the report and who has the right to publish it?

Many of these are sensitive and, where possible, any problem should be anticipated in the early stage odd negotiation since clearly these issues lie in the political world of evaluation.

Distinct types of evaluation

MacDonald (1974) in his political classification of evaluation studies in education suggests that there are three distinct types: the 'bureaucratic', the 'autocratic' and the 'democratic'. Bureaucratic evaluation he describes as an 'unconditional service' to the government department where the evaluator accepts

its values, provides the kind of information wanted in a credible style, and relinquishes all ownership of the report. Autocratic evaluation is a conditional service to the government department where 'external evaluation of policy (is offered) in exchange for compliance with its recommendations.' The evaluator acts as adviser, retains independence, but shares ownership of the report, and is legitimized by, research peers and bureaucratic managers. Democratic evaluation is 'an information service to the community about the characteristics of the educational programme' where the evaluator acts as a broker, interpreting the perspectives of different groups to one another. Informants control the information and its use. The report is non-recommendatory.

While these are perhaps 'ideal types' the distinctions made are useful in the present discussion since MacDonald's typology illustrates well the importance of negotiating at an early stage not just procedure, relationships, and resources, but rights and responsibilities in what can be a highly political process. Some external evaluators, aware of the possible implications of their work, insist at the outset on a written signed contract which lists the points of agreement reached.

Negotiations complete, the practical and highly individual process of evaluation can proceed. Much of the general planning will in fact have been done prior to negotiation but the design and style of the study will now have to be finalised and the research instruments selected. The outcome of these decisions – the implementation of the fieldwork, the analysis and interpretation of the data and its documentation in the final report – is, of course, the substance of the evaluation process and it may represent weeks, months or years of effort depending on the scale of the programme and the relative emphasis on formative or summative evaluation. This leads us to a discussion of the different roles an external evaluator can play within that process.

Roles and standards

The external evaluator involved in formative evaluation will play a very different role to that played by the evaluator involved in summative evaluation. The role of the formative evaluator will be to monitor progress and influence the programme's direction in the light of his/her findings. The evaluator will work closely with the project team on a continuing basis while remaining apart from it. The evaluator involved in summative evaluation will have no pretensions to influencing the programme except perhaps in retrospect through his/her report.

It will be clear too that evaluators play very different 'political' roles according to the model and the nature of the contract. MacDonald's typology outlined in the previous section shows clearly the many different roles an external evaluator may play in relation to others who have their own interests in the programme, particularly the programme sponsors. His 'democratic' model, unlike the other models, also implies a very close relationship with programme participants and, by implication, would seem to demand an evaluator who can play his/her role by identifying sympathetically with the broad aims of the work. This is a contentious point. Most would probably agree with House (1980) that:

> 'People being evaluated do not want a neutral evaluator, one who is unconcerned about the issues. A person on trial would not choose a judge totally removed from his own social system.'

But not everyone would agree unconditionally that 'people being evaluated' should have that choice nor would they agree necessarily with House that 'the evaluator must be seen as caring, as interested, as responsive to the relevant arguments'. For some, 'caring', 'interest' and 'responsiveness' clearly lie at the heart of good evaluation: for others they contaminate the role which the external evaluator is expected to play.

The final role we explore briefly is that played by the evaluator in relation to the wider audience who are the general readership of the final report. Again we return to the influence of model and style: the tighter the experimental design and the greater the emphasis on quantification and statistical analysis, the more likely it is that the report will be meaningful to a far-removed universal audience, but the link between the audience and the author will be weak. Conversely, the more illuminative the style, the greater the emphasis on context and on depicting the dynamic nature of the particular programme, the less likely it is that the report will be meaningful to a wide audience: the link between audience and author will however be strong. On this latter model several writers describe the role of the evaluator as one in which he/she engages in 'dialogue' with the readership of the report and aims for a process of interaction and communication where insight and understanding are dependent on the efforts of both parties. As House (1980) argues, the evaluator is responsible for his/her judgments but the audience has a personal responsibility for refining and interpreting the data presented to them in the light of their own experience since the explanations they are given are never fully convincing but neither are they entirely arbitrary. Both parties have to make an effort if they are to communicate. 'In the fullest sense, an evaluation is dependent both on the person who makes the evaluative statement and on the person who receives it.'

Standards

Finally, a brief comment on standards in evaluation research. Like all research, evaluation studies aim for reliability and validity. Beyond that, and in the light of growing concern about the quality of evaluation studies in the 1970s, they are now expected to meet other specific criteria. Several attempts have been made to define the criteria which should be used in 'evaluating evaluation' but probably the best known is that drawn up by the Evaluation Standards Committee of the American Educational Research Association in 1981. Thirty separate criteria are identified under four broad headings: utility (8 criteria), feasibility (3),

propriety (8) and accuracy (11). The list is helpful but formidable. Nevertheless it takes us back to the starting point of this chapter – what are we looking for? – because one thing the audience of any evaluation study is entitled to look for, whatever the model or style, is rigour, the meeting of standards recognised to be valid. In the last analysis the question is not which model, approach or style is 'best', but how appropriate were the model and style chosen, and how well was the study executed.

In summary then the present chapter has outlined first what the reader might reasonably expect to be 'looking for' from the evaluation depicted later in this paper; second to outline the range of choices of model, style, role and so on which in theory are available to the external evaluator. The reasons for the choices made and the description of what in this study was being 'looked for' are outlined in the second half of chapter two. Before that however, an explanation of the context of the evaluation.

2. THE CONTEXT AND THE PROCESS

The context: the community school idea

In order to understand the Craigroyston Curriculum Project and its Under-Fives Centre it is important to understand its starting point, the idea of the community school.

While there may be a general consensus on the broad principles of 'community education' there is no prototype of a 'community school'. The explanation is relatively simple: by its very nature the community school is aiming to reflect and to be reflected in the community of which it is part. Two things follow: first, that every school has, and always has had, the potential to be a community school, at least in some limited sense; second, that by definition, every community school is unique.

The 1970s, however, saw in many parts of the Western world a new impetus to the idea of the community school. Growing interest in wider movements such as parent involvement in education, continuing education for adults, school management, and community development through schools, all seemed to merge in a new interpretation of the community school idea. In some countries the idea was encapsulated in bricks and mortar: small numbers of purpose-built community schools were opened incorporating multi-purpose areas such as game halls, restaurants, adult lounges, as well as public libraries and health clinics, all aimed at facilitating a growing positive relationship between school and community.

In Scotland, only two administrative areas (Regions) developed the purpose-built community school to any extent: Grampian Region in the north-east and Lothian Region in the central belt incorporating

Edinburgh, the context of the present study. Nisbet *et al* (1980), in their study of Grampian's community schools, suggest that the main principles behind the community school idea are: mutually supportive relationships between school and community; a sharing of facilities between school and community; a community-oriented curriculum; lifelong education; community involvement in decision-making and in the management of schools; and community development. Studies of the development of the community school idea in Lothian are to be found in Vallely and Peacock (1982) and in Peacock, Crowther and Vallely (1986).

Two administrative differences between schools in the two Regions are worth mentioning as they are relevant to the present study. First, while in Grampian there was a 'dual management' structure in which responsibility for the development of the community school lay jointly with the head teacher and the senior community education worker, in Lothian there had been a policy decision to retain a unitary management structure. Second, while in Grampian the term 'community' school' was not used officially and for almost all administrative purposes no distinction was drawn between these new schools and others, in Lothian the situation was quite different. There, a handful of schools, purpose-built in the 1970s, were given 'community school' status, a designation which brought with it not only increased resources but an alternative contract for teaching staff which allowed them to develop a more flexible community role.

The context: the Craigroyston Curriculum Project

Craigroyston Community High School is set in the Greater Pilton/Muirhouse area on the north-west side of Edinburgh, Scotland. The area is one of local authority housing from the post-war period and is well known for its high incidence of most of the common indicators of social deprivation: poverty, unemployment, poor quality housing, large families, single parents and chronic ill-health including depressive illnesses. Attendant problems are: high levels of crime and delinquency, alcoholism, drug abuse and low average levels of school achievement.

This, of course, is the picture derived from the cold statistics. A complementary but more intangible picture is painted by those who talk warmly of the resilience of many families in the area, the strong family and community ties, and the many local initiatives, expressed, for example, in community action and self-help groups.

In 1979 Craigroyston High School (as it was then known) applied for a grant from the Bernard van Leer Foundation and was awarded £232,000 for a three-year project to examine how a comprehensive school in an area of multiple deprivation and without purpose-built community facilities could develop its community role. The first phase of the 'Curriculum Project' ran from 1981 to 1984 and a second phase of funding of £40,000 was then granted to 1987. The scale of the Project has been ambitious: in the early stages twelve working parties were set up covering among other things: continuing education, under-fives provision, leisure, the arts, an evening youth club and alternative day school provision. Over the years it has attracted a lot of interest locally, nationally and internationally. Its broad task has been to develop the community school idea in its own unique situation and to identify some of the initiatives and problems in that process which might have implications for other areas. A more specific integral aim of the Curriculum Project was that it would lead to the recognition of Craigroyston High School as one of Lothian's designated community schools alongside its purpose-built counterparts. This aim was, in fact, achieved in 1985.

The context: the Under-Fives Centre, the Curriculum Project and Evaluation

Providing care and education for young children had always been seen as an integral part of the development of the community school idea in Craigroyston High School. As the evaluation report (Part II) points out, as early as the spring of 1980 a working party in the school was already formulating its ideas on the aims any under-fives provision would try to fulfill. These were eventually agreed as:

a) to give opportunities for parents to engage in expanded educational opportunities;
b) to develop the concept of lifelong education in an informal atmosphere;
c) to give nursery children a headstart;
d) to give students on school courses a first-hand knowledge of young children;
e) to help parents extend skills in child-rearing, especially play, and have confidence in their own abilities.

The story of how the Under-Fives Centre tried to fulfil these aims is, of course, outlined later as the substance of this paper. At this stage, however,it is important for the reader simply to keep these aims in mind. It is also important to bear in mind the following points concerning the relationships between the Under-Fives Centre and the Curriculum Project as a whole as these relate to evaluation. First, the Under-Fives Centre was only one of many elements in the Craigroyston Curriculum Project and the aim was that the work of the Centre should link clearly to the Project as a whole. Second, it was a major commitment of the Project as a whole to monitor its progress and disseminate its findings: internal evaluation was therefore a continuing process at every level over the six years of the work. Third, two external evaluations of the Project as a whole were commissioned: the first phase was evaluated by the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE unpublished report), the second phase by the Centre for Leisure Research, Moray House College of Education – Cramond Campus (forthcoming). The evaluation of the Under-Fives Centre reproduced here is the result of a decision taken in the Spring of 1985 that the Under-Fives Centre, which by then had been in operation for four years, should be the subject of a separate evaluation and dissemination exercise. A video* of the Centre's activities was produced and an evaluation of the Centre in its own right was

* 'A Community Goes to School', Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre, 1985

commissioned. With this total context in mind we turn now to the evaluation process itself.

The Process

While it would be very convenient to be able to analyse the evaluation of the Under-Fives Centre according to the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 1 (aims and limitation: models and styles; negotiation and contract; roles and standards) no 'real' project is likely to be as neat as that. Certainly no project based on case study, as this one was, could be as neat: rather, like most, it was '... an interplay of resources, possibilities, creativity and personal judgment by the people involved' (Ruthman 1984). Consequently, while we explore aims, roles, styles etc. in the next few pages, it will be clear that these were all interdependent and we have therefore chosen to analyse the evaluation through the chronological sequence in which it took place: aims and expectations: negotiation and planning; fieldwork; reporting.

The process: aims and expectations

The evaluation of Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre had initially three broad audiences: the project's sponsors, its participants, and a wider readership of interested practitioners (now expanded through the decision to publish this study) who, for whatever reason, might be interested in an innovatory project in under-fives provision. There were therefore three broad purposes, not necessarily identified neatly with the three audiences: accountability, programme continuity and/or change, and dissemination. There was then a sense in which what was being 'looked for' was linked to these three broad purposes. The parameters of the evaluation were in fact defined initially by the sponsors, first in a formal general invitation from Lothian's Education Department, and second by a confirmatory letter from the Bernard van Leer Foundation in which the detail was spelled out. It was, however, made clear informally that the negotiation of the evaluation 'contract' would be done at school level and ultimately was a matter for the evaluator and the project director, who was also the head teacher.

Before that stage was reached, however, the evaluator (henceforth 'I') spent some days in the school and particularly in the Centre trying to come to terms with what the aims and expectations of the evaluation would be. Several things became immediately clear: first that there was a sense in which the Bernard van Leer Foundation, after four years' experience of the Centre, had already done its own broad evaluation. Clearly, the fact that it had already funded the production of a video on the work of the Centre showed that it was thought worthy of dissemination: the evaluation was in a sense part of that process. Second, a formal evaluation at this stage would be important evidence in influencing Lothian Regional Council who would soon have to decide on future funding. Third, and perhaps not unrelated, it was clear that the expectations of the project staff about the evaluator was that he/she should understand and be sympathetic to the aims of community schools and nursery education. The last point is important (and its importance will become clearer on reading the report) because it links to the final 'expectation' at this stage. It came from the Under-Fives staff that the evaluation should try to provide some hard 'evidence' of how attendance at the Under-Fives Centre benefited children as well as mothers.

Those first few days in the school were invaluable. Given that visits had to be intermittent, there was time to read internal reports, working party minutes, and correspondence, and to return on the next visit ready with more 'seeing' eyes to merge into the atmosphere: to observe, play, question, discuss, eat, chat, argue, help, sympathise, joke, share – both in the Centre and in the school's 'adult lounge'. I called it 'participant observation'! At the end of that stage, I knew I wanted to evaluate the Under-Fives Centre and I wanted to do it through case study. I felt completely at home, I felt I was beginning to see some of the issues as well as the problems of evaluation. I was ready to plan a study and negotiate a contract.

The process: negotiation and planning

The argument for case study was put to the staff team and accepted without question. Open access was given willingly and without qualification: to the building, to meetings and other activities, to documents. I was free to approach staff, students and parents as I wished, all of them, of course, having the right to refuse to cooperate. There was only one exception: I was not to have access to a confidential previous evaluation of the Project as a whole, only to sections relevant to the Under-Fives Centre. I had to accept that.

It was also agreed that staff would have the opportunity to comment on drafts of the final report and that all reasonable account would be taken of their comments. We did not define 'reasonable account' nor did we discuss the possibility of serious disagreement or strategies to which we might have to resort. Probably, in retrospect that was a mistake although, in fact, there proved to be no problem. What we did agree was that ownership of the report would lie with the Project sponsors and theirs was the right, if they wished, to publish. The 'contract' was partly written, partly taken on trust. Again, in retrospect, perhaps both 'sides' should have been more stringent about that but, in the event, it did not matter. Perhaps we were lucky.

The broad plan was to base the case study largely on participant observation, interviews and the analysis of documents relevant to the Centre's development. Opportunities for other kinds of fieldwork would be taken if and when they arose. It was hoped that there would be an opportunity for incorporating some quantitative data as well as the qualitative data which clearly would be at the heart of the study. I was ready to begin the fieldwork.

The process: fieldwork

All data were gathered during 29 days of fieldwork in the period May 1985 to January 1986. It came from the following sources:

a) Under-Fives Centre registers;
b) interim reports and working party minutes;

23

c) records of daily patterns of attendance kept by staff in the period August to December 1985;
d) patterns of child/parent involvement in the Centre assessed by staff;
e) questionnaire to 46 members of the high school teaching staff;
f) personal interviews with 52 individuals – 17 parents and childminders, three staff and three students at the Centre, 12 High School staff, 17 Regional and area staff who had a professional link with the work of the Centre;
g) participant observation throughout the period in the Centre playroom, the parents' room, the adult lounge and at parent meetings in the High School.

It should be clear that a very substantial 'case record' was built up from which to draw evidence for the final report. It should also be clear that it was too varied and too complex for any profitable discussion in the present limited space. A few points should, however, be made. First, all fieldwork with the exception of records kept by staff was done by me personally so that I quickly began to build up a dynamic interactive picture of the role of the Under-Fives Centre in the area and in the school. Second, the case record contained quantitative data from registers and staff records as well as the much more substantial qualitative data gleaned from field notes. Third, there was an initial attempt to tape interviews but the tape recorder was regarded as highly intrusive so the strategy was reluctantly abandoned.

The one substantial point which must be made about the fieldwork at this stage is that it incorporated several serious attempts at 'triangulation' where I deliberately set out to disconfirm my own interpretations. I knew I was intuitively sympathetic to most, if not all, of the aims of the Centre and I knew that was at least part of the reason (quite legitimately) that I had been invited to conduct the evaluation. It was also clear that most of the people I interviewed, past and present parents, staff, and the many voluntary and professional workers in the area who knew the

Centre, also shared my perceptions. It was therefore doubly important to hunt for the contradictory evidence.

It came almost fortuitously in the opportunity to circulate a questionnaire to High School staff at an in-service training session; it came in discussion with a few school students. Where it should have come from to a greater degree than it did was from those many mothers who came to the Centre very infrequently or, having come a very few times, did not come back. I found this group, despite the fact it was large, difficult to trace. I did trace and talk with a few, but several failed to keep appointments and others had very little to say. This I acknowledge as a minor weakness of the evaluation: the mothers I spoke to were largely, though not exclusively, the regular attenders and the (very) satisfied customers.

Schon (1979) gives us a fascinating analysis of how our perceptions of a problem or an issue define how we tackle it. I was interested, if not surprised, to find that a substantial minority of High School staff had perceptions of the Under-Fives Centre and pre-school education which were very different to my own and they therefore saw its function very differently. I caught something of that. I wish I had been able better to probe the case of the missing parents.

The process: the report

Again limited space allows only a few points to be made about the final report contained in Part II of this volume. First, like any report it aims to be 'readable': trying to be true to the model and style it represents, it aims to portray the 'case' in a way which increases the reader's understanding and to provide some insight into common issues. The style is deliberately varied: descriptive and anecdotal as well as theoretical and analytic.

Second, the report quite deliberately incorporates a substantial section on a possible theoretical framework within which the Under-Fives Centre might be understood. The theoretical framework, with the

observational field notes, is the legitimisation of the Centre's contribution to child and family development. The major point is, however, that the framework, in the tradition of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was the result, not the starting point, of the evaluation.

Third, the report is recommendatory. Despite its pretensions to a democratic style it has many of the overtones of bureaucratic and autocratic evaluation, including the perceived need to make an explicit recommendation to one of the Project's main sponsors, Lothian Regional Council.

Fourth, being a realist, I took heed of Cronbach's (1980) warning about information overload and the limited time evaluation users are prepared to give to a report:

> 'Careful exposition that makes the story more complex and more true make the listening harder and the audience smaller.'

An abbreviated version of 20 pages was made available!

Fifth, two draft versions of the final report were circulated for comment among a small group of Craigroyston's staff and the external evaluators of the total Project. There were no serious disagreements and many helpful comments, suggested additions, and amendments were incorporated into the text.

Finally I have to acknowledge that in the final report I am in places almost totally dependent on the reader's intuitive recognition of the point being made. The outstanding example is in chapter two in the section entitled 'Some episodes, large and small'. As I try to depict the essence of what to me is an important issue through a short 'vignette' I am dependent on being met half-way by the reader in the kind of 'dialogue' described in the previous chapter. Not everyone will see through my eyes the instances of learning and

caring which I depict. Nor should they: what I hope they may see even a little more clearly through their own eyes are the opportunities for learning and caring in their own setting. For those whose circumstances are totally removed from the kind of setting described in this paper that may be difficult. Statistical tables and analysis might have been easier, but they would have masked the dynamic complexities of what the Under-Fives Centre is about. The expectation of 'hard evidence' on children's development, for example, was not met, partly because of the time-scale involved but even more because, in the particular context, it seemed to me a spurious objective. I had to hope that the 'evidence' of children's learning progress was there in the 'episodes', in the reporting of the documents from those who knew the children best, and in the theoretical analysis of the optimum conditions for children's development. Perhaps not everyone would approve, but in the circumstances that was the style and approach I chose.

The evaluator, however, is in no position to evaluate his/her own evaluation and so, in conclusion, I return to House (1980) and my dialogue with the reader:

> 'The test of an evaluation is not accuracy in predicting an event but whether the audience can see new relations and answer new but relevant questions.'

At this point the evaluation is (at last!) ready to be 'tested'.

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PART II THE EVALUATION REPORT: CRAIGROYSTON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL UNDER-FIVES CENTRE

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I would like to thank sincerely the many people who so willingly gave me their time and cooperation throughout this project. The Craigroyston community and the High School in particular have been the subject of so many research interests in the last few years that it says much for the concern and integrity of residents and professionals both in the area and at Regional level that they are still so willing to share their time and their experience.

It is not always a comfortable experience to visit Craigroyston High School but no-one ever suggested that Craigroyston was a comfortable area in which to live or work. It was always however a dynamic experience where one was always guaranteed a warm welcome and assured of being included, assisted or ignored as appropriate. Sincere thanks are due to the project director and headteacher, Hugh Mackenzie, to his staff – particularly Wallace Wood, Wendy Dignan, Grace Anderson, Addie Eddington and Alex Wallace, and to the Under-Fives parents all of whom throughout my association with them paid me the great compliment of treating me as an equal member of the team. My thanks, too, to Erica Wimbush of the Centre for Leisure Research, Dunfermline College of Physical Education for her continued interest and her generous constructive help.

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1986

I. THE BACKGROUND

Introduction

'A microcosm of the whole project', 'a baby-sitting service', 'a life-saver', 'a big family', 'sometimes a bit protected and complacent', 'a very hard act to follow', 'a very special place', 'a totally different world', 'just like any other nursery school', 'my valium', 'a convenient stepping-stone', 'the heart of the school', 'not for me', 'a total success'.

Overwhelmingly positive, sometimes neutral, very occasionally negative, these are some of the comments on Craigroyston's Under-Fives Centre from those who, in 1985, viewed it from their very different perspectives. But why the differences, and why, particularly on the positive side, such intensity of feeling? To answer that is to try to tell the story of the Centre, and like all stories it should start at the beginning.

Origins

The first publicly recorded 'beginning' was in the Spring of 1980 when the first formal meetings of the Preschool Working Party of the Craigroyston Curriculum Project were held. The general remit of the working party (composed entirely of interested Craigroyston staff) was to explore the potential of pre-school provision in furthering the community aims of Craigroyston High School: its main focus was on the idea of a 'creche' which might enable parents of young children to attend school classes. It was not the first time that the idea of a creche had been mooted within the school but the new concept was to have wider aims. They were:

a) to give opportunities for parents to engage in extended educational opportunities;

b) to develop the concept of lifelong education in an informal atmosphere;

c) to give nursery children a headstart;

d) to give students on school courses a first-hand knowledge of young children;

e) to help parents extend skills in child-rearing especially play, and have confidence in their own ability.

In the Spring of 1980, just how these long-term aims were to be achieved was a matter for the future: the immediate concerns were to find accommodation, to negotiate staffing, and even at this very early stage, to establish the idea more clearly in the collective Craigroyston mind by giving the 'creche' its own distinctive identity and title. This last point exercised the working party considerably. It might have been christened the 'Craigroyston Kindergarten'; it might have been the 'Craigroyston Children's Centre' or the 'Craigroyston Nursery'; it came nearest to being the 'Craigie Under-Fives Centre'. One member of the working party suggested it should be called the 'Hague Kindergarten', but presumably it was felt either that that was carrying gratitude too far or that the term was not entirely appropriate for a community school in the heart of Edinburgh. Whatever the arguments, in the light of subsequent discussion, still in anticipation of its formal birth, the name 'Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre' was finally agreed in October 1980.

At the same time, a lot of preliminary work was going on. Members of the working party, and particularly its chairman, were exploring the many possible ways in which a creche might develop. Discussions with the Region's advisers, visits to local pre-school groups and creches already established in other comprehensive schools, internal planning and negotiation represented many hours of hard work.

Premises A suitable room for the 'creche' had been identified early on. It was situated in the music block of the school and was seen to be particularly suitable since:

a) it would not distract students in school;

b) it gave easy access to playing fields;

c) it provided adequate storage;

d) it had suitable toilet facilities;

e) it would allow easy access for parents (Working Party Minute, 7.5.80).

Various improvements and adaptations to the accommodation would have to be made but the working party was optimistic that structural changes would be effected in time for the scheme to start in August 1980. Its optimism was ill-founded and probably naive. There was a frustrating delay in finalising the financial arrangements and it was not until nine months of discussion, negotiation and change had passed that the working party could announce in triumph 'It looks as though there has been a start made to the nursery ... It has been cleared of furniture' (Working Party Minute, 11.3.81). Two weeks later pessimism had returned '... no definite date has been received for the start of the building alterations' (Working Party Minute, 25.3.81). By the summer of that year, however, the alterations were virtually complete: toilets had been plumbed, corridors had been painted and, most important, the physical focus of the Centre had been transformed from a formal classroom to a comfortable airy and bright playroom for young children. The Under-Fives Centre had achieved its own physical identity.

Equipment In the interim months, while the building alterations were in progress, the working party had also set about the rather easier task of equipping the Centre. As early as June 1980, school students had been asked to bring toys, and some preliminary costing of both educational

and non-educational equipment had been started. By Spring 1981, in anticipation of the opening of the playroom, the technical department in the school had agreed to collaborate with the Under-Fives staff (by then in post) to plan and produce equipment and furniture of the playroom and an outdoor play area. It was a major contribution to the Centre much appreciated by everyone.

Staff From its first meetings in Spring 1980, the Pre-school Working Party had put its priority on staffing: the quality of its staff, they believed, would be the key to the success or otherwise of the Centre. Staff salaries were to come form the Bernard van Leer Foundation, but clearly it was important that their appointment and the negotiation of their contracts should be done in collaboration with the Education Department of Lothian Region. It had been agreed that one teacher and one nursery nurse should be appointed and there had been total consensus that those appointed should not only be appropriately professionally qualified but should be of particularly high calibre. By the beginning of the school year 1980-81, the working party, anxious that the teacher should join them in the planning of the Centre, were pressing for an appointment to be made as soon as possible. By September, questions of secondment, responsibility, salary, etc. had been negotiated with the Region and the Van Leer Foundation, the role of the teacher had been agreed and a work specification had been drawn up. The main responsibilities of the teacher were to be:

a) to meet the social and educational needs of children in the Centre;

b) to meet the needs of parents and students working in the Centre;

c) to be accountable to the Steering committee responsible for the development of the Curriculum Project as a whole.

By the end of 1980 Wendy Dignan, headteacher of an Edinburgh nursery school, had been appointed to the Curriculum Project and had started work on the basis of four mornings secondment per week. Her first weeks, in fact, were spent establishing contacts in the area, meeting local workers, visiting local playgroups and primary schools as well as creche facilities where they existed in the Region's small number of community schools. At the same time she started meeting and talking with school students on the child care course.

First participants

By February there were nine children and their mothers on the register, six mothers attending woodwork classes, four attending sewing and typing. The Under-Fives playroom, of course, was far from ready (indeed alterations were not even to begin until several more weeks had passed) and temporary accommodation had to be found in the school.

By the early summer, however, the basic groundwork had been laid: the building alterations were at last underway and looking promising; Grace Anderson, a nursery nurse, had joined Wendy Dignan in May; Wendy Dignan was teaching school students on the child care course as part of the regular school curriculum and school students were positively involved with the children; the woodwork department was busily engaged in making equipment and furniture – and numbers on the register had grown to 15. The scene was set for new and possibly exciting developments from August 1981.

Principles of the Centre

It is important to note at this stage that, even in the first six months of the working party's discussions, it had established some of the principles on which the Under-Fives Centre was to be built. First, it was to be professionally run by a teacher and nursery nurse of proven experience and ability (Minute of 11.6.1980). Second, it was to be clearly established as an integral part of the secondary school; the teacher and nursery nurse were to be full members of the school staff (Minute 11.6.80) and the Centre would be linked to the

central administration (Minute 24.6.80). Third, there was a general perception of where the Centre would differ in its emphasis from more conventional nursery school provision '... if more mothers than usual are involved there could be a slant towards education of mother and child rather than just child'. At the same time there was a clear recognition of possible organisational problems in achieving these educational objectives:

> 'We do not want to find the creche becoming a child-minding centre where too many children come and go for short periods. A stable secure centre for children to attend for a reasonable period of time each day over a reasonable time span is preferred'. (Minute 11.6.80)

Fourth, the involvement of school students should be a priority – 'students from the child care course should be involved immediately' (Minute 24.6.80). Fifth, there should be no charge (Minute 24.6.80). Finally, the development of the Centre was to be monitored through regular meetings of the working party and careful recording of its discussions (Minute 17.9.80). An examination of those minutes over the life of the working party in the next few years shows that, with the exception of the emphasis on involving school students, the initial principles remained largely intact.

Developments 1981-85

The developments of the next few years are well documented in the internal reports of the Curriculum Project as well as in reports and minutes of the Under-Fives Working Party and there is no need to record the detail here. It is however important to identify some of the main landmarks in order to understand the pattern and pace of growth. First, the children, their parents, and the programme. Unfortunately school registers and detailed records of those attending the Centre in the period 1981-84 were lost in a fire in the school, but the broad facts are available. In August 1981 the roll stood at 12, all children of parents attending school classes. A month later it had risen to 33, and from that point there was steady growth. An early feature was

that children were particularly young: 21 out of the 33 at this stage were under two years of age, a pattern later reversed in favour of older children. The children largely spent their time in the playroom with staff and students, parents having settled their children went to school classes, woodwork, pottery, art, video-production as well as academic O-grade and Higher subjects. In the earliest stage, most families came from the immediate area encouraged by the visits Wendy Dignan had made in the first weeks of her appointment to local pre-school groups, and later by the extensive programme of home visits she had undertaken along with Grace Anderson. Subsequently, as the reputation of the Centre spread, it began to attract those from further afield and, although there is now no way of checking its accuracy, it has remained part of the 'image' of that early period that the Centre began to attract a large number of families from outwith the immediate catchment area of the school.

Expansion of activities

Gradually the work of the Under-Fives Centre expanded. First, the programme of activities. Central to the whole concept was the educational play provision for children. By degrees the staff were able to translate into reality what was for them the heart of the whole idea, a 'learning centre' for children. In a setting where emotional security and sound social relationships were seen as the prerequisites of learning, a carefully planned programme also aimed to give children opportunities for imaginative and physical play and to develop language and thinking skills. The best principles of pre-school education were soon well established.

At the same time a parallel programme of adult activities was developing. As early as March 1982 the first adult courses organised and led by Wendy Dignan and run in the Centre itself had begun; the Open University course 'The Pre-school child' had attracted eight mothers and was to be repeated in two subsequent years. In 1983 a discussion group for parents started, led by a psychiatrist who encouraged participants to look constructively at their own lives

and problems. The following year saw the launching of the course 'Child Matters' for a group of childminders (who increasingly were attending the Centre on a regular basis) and parents. By that stage too Alex Wallace, head of the Learning Centre in the school, was holding discussion sessions regularly on matters of topical interest to Under-Fives parents. A keep-fit class, again run by Wendy Dignan, also proved popular.

Parent/child activities

Another crucial development was the programme of activities for parents and children to enjoy together. One of the earliest of these was the swimming sessions in the school pool. Another was 'jumping beans' – music and movement sessions for parents and children. Popular too were outings in the minibus to, for example, the airport, the Forth Road Bridge, Gorgie Farm, the beach: 'outdoor education' for parents and children together. By late 1983 a group of parents and staff were talking about the possibility of a residential weekend, and the first of these highly successful family ventures took place at the Ratho Centre in June 1984, the second a year later.

From the beginning then, the programme of the Under-Fives Centre developed along three dimensions: at the heart of it was the programme of educational play for children; parallel to that developed an educational programme and, later, social functions for adults; and, perhaps the most innovative feature of the Centre, there developed a programme of child-parent activities which both encouraged and built upon the parent-child bond for the benefit of both.

Importance of the school setting

It is important to point out at this stage that while many of the 'child' and 'adult' activities would be possible in any good conventional pre-school setting, the child-parent activities were made easier and some were only possible because of the Under-Fives setting in a comprehensive secondary school like Craigroyston. For example, the Centre could use the school's facilities such as the swimming pool or the

minibuses; it could call upon its expertise such as that of the outdoor education staff. Perhaps most important however was the opportunity which the Centre had to be innovative, for example in its own interpretation of 'outdoor education for pre-school children and their parents, knowing that it would be given every support and encouragement in a school which had already established its own reputation for innovative thinking.

Second, a quick look at staff and students. From August 1981 Wendy Dignan and Grace Anderson were employed full-time at the Centre. School students on CSE child care courses had been involved from the beginning and that continued in some form throughout the period. By early 1982 the first placements had been negotiated for students on the Government's Youth Opportunities Programme and the following year a student on the first Youth Training scheme, having completed her placement at the Centre, was subsequently invited to become its first para-professional. In March 1985 she was succeeded as para-professional by Addie Eddington. By that stage too, nursery nurse students at Stevenson College were also attending the Centre regularly on placement.

Third, the building alterations and facilities whose costs Lothian Region had agreed to meet. After the opening of the playroom in the summer of 1981 the next priority was the adaptation of the large storeroom next door to a parents' room. Although the idea of a one-way mirror which would have allowed parents to observe their children at play had to be abandoned because of cost, all other suggestions had been accepted in principle by the Region, and by March 1982 the structural alterations were complete, comfortable furniture had been installed, storage accommodation had been fitted and coffee-making facilities completed the picture. The parents' room was an asset which proved highly popular from the beginning. By another year, another milestone had been passed: an outdoor area immediately adjoining the playroom had been completed and fenced and by June 1983 the technical department in the school had

again come up trumps by furnishing it with sturdy climbing equipment and window boxes. There was one negative note: the entrance hall to the Centre shared with school students attending the music department was constantly vandalised. Those who attended the Under-Fives Centre had come to terms with the fact that all attempts to brighten the entrance with flowers, plants and paintings were doomed to failure and they had learned simply to live with the graffiti on the outside walls and doors.

Pre-school working party

Fourth, the working party on pre-school education. For the first two years of the project this comprised teachers in the comprehensive school and latterly Wendy Dignan as the representative of the Centre itself. By November 1982, however, parents were invited to participate in meetings; by January 1983 the times of meetings had been changed from afternoons to mornings to accommodate mothers and in February that year mothers first attended as full members. Later that same year it was a mother who represented the Under-Fives Centre on the curriculum Project Management Committee for the first time and by early 1984 the composition of the pre-school working party had changed completely. By that stage the 'management committee' for the Under-Fives Centre was a largely internal affair with no formal membership, its meetings open to all interested parents, staff and students associated with the Centre.

In all of these internal developments, the Centre gradually assumed more and more responsibility for itself. Ideas for new activities, new equipment, new uses for existing space, family outings, adult social functions, were picked up through day-to-day chat as well as through more formal meetings and generated their own momentum. Fund-raising through sales of work, raffles, etc. became common and everyone contributed as they could.

Finally, even in the first years of its life, the Centre had begun to move from a preoccupation with establishing itself and its own activities to a more conscious

concern to forge relationships with the rest of the school and the community as a whole.

Relationships outside the centre

Links with the school were, of course, relatively easily made. As a major part of the Curriculum Project, the Centre had the continuing interest and involvement of the senior management team in the school and members of the original working party who had all been members of the school staff maintained their interest in the Centre both formally and informally over the years. The closest practical links in the early stages were probably with those who ran the child care courses and those whose responsibility lay in the field of adult education; more recently it was with those in the latter group who organised or ran courses where Under-Fives mothers constituted a large part of the membership.

At the same time Under-Fives staff themselves were full members of staff of the high school, and in later years Wendy Dignan was not only a member of the Curriculum Project's continuing education department but was also promoted to the position of Assistant Principal Teacher (Guidance) in recognition of the work she did with adults at the Centre. This in turn, of course, meant that she attended principal teachers' meetings . All Under-Fives staff also participated fully in the school's regular in-service programme on community-based topics, and, as individuals, they also tried to make links by using the general school staffroom and dining room facilities whenever possible. They were careful too, to include the Under-Fives Centre in any general school activities: coffee mornings, sales of work, a sponsored walk – the Under-Fives mothers and staff (and children) were there.

In the wider community, the Centre tried to establish its name and to promote an image of welcome. Preliminary work had been done in the earliest days by the staff visiting local primary schools and playgroups and simply knocking at doors publicising what the Under-Fives Centre was about. As time passed, the

expanding role of the Centre made it easier to welcome a wider cross-section of the community: there was increasing emphasis on adults who were attending classes also dropping in at other times with their children simply to play together or for the parent to meet others in the parents' room while their children played next door. By 1983 the point was being made quite specifically that even where adults had no children of their own, they would be welcome at the Centre (Minute of 11.2.1983). By that time too some local childminders had begun to use the Centre regularly and more and more the original function of the Centre as a place where parents could leave their children while they went to school classes was becoming blurred.

Links with local services

Local professionals from the Social Work Department and the Health Centre visited the Under-Fives Centre increasingly and links grew with some of the many voluntary organisations operating in the area. Early in 1984 the WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) approached the school to house and organise the Pilton Toy Library and thus began another major innovation. From May that year the toy library, organised by a team of mothers and led by Grace Anderson, the Under-Fives nursery nurse, ran every Wednesday morning in a classroom near the Under-Fives playroom, providing not only a specific lending service but a point of social contact for a growing band of mothers, childminders and day carers along with their children from the Craigroyston community.

In March the following year Wendy Dignan took the initiative to establish a local (or mini) CFUF (Committee For Under-Fives) made up of representatives of all those who worked with under-fives in the area. Lothian had established a regional as well as divisional committees on a similar pattern and had encouraged the development of local groups, but until early 1985 none had existed in the Greater Pilton/Muirhouse area. All CFUF groups share the same aims: to stimulate an informed awareness of the needs of under-fives and how these can be met; to

provide cooperation and understanding among providers; and to exchange information and views with CFUF groups at other levels.

Contributions by mothers

Meantime, by 1984, individual mothers were capitalising on their experience in the Under-Fives Centre and were making their contribution to the wider community. At the same time they were making the work of the Centre more widely known. Among the early examples were one mother who had been appointed play-leader in a local playgroup; another had introduced video camera work to the mothers at the mother and toddler group in the nearby community centre; another had been appointed as a 'play visitor' in the local social work team; and yet another had played a central role in establishing a support group for women dependent on tranquiliser drugs.

In its relatively short life therefore, the Under-Fives Centre had by 1985 become fully operational: its role had expanded greatly as had its numbers and it continued to look for new opportunities for growth and development. The Centre had remained true to Wendy Dignan's statement made after only one year of full operation:

> 'Mrs Dignan said that although the Centre was established, it would always be developing. Nursery education is never static'.
> (Minute 25.8.1982)

The principles established by the original working party remained, but others also became central in the light of experiment and continuing reappraisal. For example, although the Centre had been established to meet the needs of both parents and children as parents attended school classes, the Under-Fives staff, while recognising and trying to meet the needs of parents, were unequivocal in their commitment to the interests of children:

'..... the welfare of each child would always take precedence over other considerations where the staff in the Under-Fives Centre were concerned'. (Minute 11.2.1983)

One of the practical outcomes of this principle was the insistence of the Under-Fives staff that children should be happily settled in the playroom before their parents left for classes, that parents should always be within the school complex and their movements known so that they could be called back at any time if necessary.

The centre as a support system

Another example was the recognition of the social function of the Centre as a support system for children and adults alike. In a community where it was easy to see and stress the negative side of life, the Centre tried to establish positive thinking through mutual support: the encouragement of good feelings about oneself and about other people was a central principle.

A few glimpses of the principle in action can be captured from reports and working party minutes:

'Sincere thanks to the people (childminders) who have helped with the extra children in the playroom to enable their colleagues to participate in the course. This has been a real team effort. A thank-you outing for those adults and their children will take place ... to Turnhouse Airport'. (Minute 26.3.1985)

And commenting on the early weeks of the toy library:

'.... we were very conscious that we were not spending enough time introducing adults and children to one another'. (Toy Library Report 7.11.1985)

And lastly:

> 'Congratulations ... to all adult students for their efforts in the recent examinations ... Well done to all who participated in summer playschemes with the community'.
> (Minute of 11.9.1984)

A careful reading of reports on the Centre of working party minutes in the years to 1985 give an almost overwhelmingly positive picture. While the staff themselves are conscious of difficulties and of some relative failure, the general picture is one of growth, expansion and success. Certainly all comments quoted from mothers reflect the same enthusiasm. 'If the Under-Fives Centre closes I will die' (Minute of 29.9.1982). 'I like coming here. It's a positive place. When you go to mother and toddler groups you sit around moaning. Here you can do things and enjoy it' (Minute of 10.11.1982). The first evaluators of the total Craigroyston Curriculum Project in 1984 also agreed with the positive image. 'There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the Centre is a success' (Peacock and Crowther 1984).

Lack of involvement of school students

The only aspect of the Under-Fives' activities minuted as causing any serious degree of concern was the involvement of school students. It had started well, but even by the second year of the project a negative note was being struck:

> '4B child care students have had a 50/50 success rate. Many of the students were not interested, or truants. It would seem that the Under-Fives Centre have had more than their fair share of non-responsive students'.
> (Minute of 10.11.1982)

The evaluators agreed:

> 'Our observations are that the staff and mothers try hard to integrate them into the work of the playroom, but often with little active response from the students'.
> (Peacock and Crowther 1984)

So much then, for the general background. With this broad resumé of the first years of the Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre we turn now to the last six months of 1985 and the beginning of the present research.

2. THE PROGRAMME AND THE PEOPLE: June 1985 – January 1986

The general programme

Simply to read through minutes of working party meetings and formal reports on the Under-Fives Centre is to miss probably its key feature – the playroom. While its importance is not minimised by the working party, it is in a sense taken for granted perhaps particularly by the original group who had no pretensions themselves to knowing about pre-school education. Members had been determined that the Centre would be professionally run, and that having been assured, they assumed, rightly, that the children's education was in capable hands.

In early summer 1985 the full-time staff at the Centre comprised still Wendy Dignan the teacher, Grace Anderson the nursery nurse and Addie Eddington who had just joined as a para-professional worker. All had come to the Centre from work settings where the immediate responsibility had been the child but where the needs of the family as a whole were also recognised: Wendy Dignan from a nursery school in a deprived area, Grace Anderson from a children's centre and Addie Eddington from child-minding in the Craigroyston area itself. The result was that the needs of children were always paramount.

The playroom itself in terms of space and physical layout was typical of many conventional nursery classes in primary schools. All the panoply of modern nursery education was there somewhere: a book corner, a sand tray, a water tray, a house corner, floor toys and puzzles, some comfortable chairs and carpeting, a display area, painting easels, tables and chairs which could double up for clay/dough play, junk modelling, baking or juice time. Immediately outside and fully visible from indoors was the outdoor area

well furnished with climbing and jumping equipment and in full use when at all possible.

The spirit and philosophy of good pre-school practice as we understand it certainly pervaded the Under-Fives playroom, although certain features of the setting, for example the numbers, the age-range, the facilities, sometimes made this difficult to achieve (points we shall return to in Chapter 5). But it was certainly 'child-centred' in every way the staff could make it. For example, each child (and mother) was made to feel that he/she 'belonged' and was important: each child was greeted individually by name each day on arrival and the session started at the child's pace; there was an emphasis on listening to and talking with children, on identifying children's present interests and on both following and extending them. Child/child and adult/child communication were encouraged at every level and with every age group.

Child-centred

Several features of the Centre made it easy for it to be 'child-centred'. First there was a relatively generous staff/child ratio and in addition there were normally students and certainly at least a few mothers either in the playroom itself or on hand in the parents' room next door. Second, children came in to the Centre gradually: a few stayed throughout the morning or afternoon, others would be there for only a short period. Other factors however made 'child-centredness' difficult: one was the age-range involved and the lack of facilities particularly for the youngest children; another was the flexibility which allowed spasmodic attendance and a consequent lack of continuity for children. The wide age-range and flexibility of attendance were on other counts strengths of the Centre, but in terms of 'child-centredness' they had also to be seen as potential weaknesses.

In terms of the general aims of pre-school education however, particularly perhaps for the age group 2 to 3½, the Under-Fives Centre was clearly fulfilling an important educational function for children.

Regular features

By the time the present research began, the other features of the Under-Fives programme were well established: swimming sessions and 'jumping beans' both for parents and children together, ran weekly. The toy library on a Wednesday morning was obviously a highlight and could attract up to 20 adults with children many of them childminders in the area. Alex Wallace's discussion group ran every Friday morning in the school for a group of around ten, mostly mothers from the Centre. Topics were chosen by the group themselves: drugs, divorce, violence, suicide were a few examples. An offshoot of that group also was a Sociology class held weekly in the autumn term of 1985. In addition, of course, a number of mothers at the Centre were pursuing their own individual interests and talents in other more formal adult classes in the school.

In the Centre itself Wendy Dignan had again organised weekly keep-fit sessions for interested parents, and early autumn saw the beginning of a different kind of child-based course for mothers. September 1985 had seen a new young group of mothers, several of them single parents, join the Centre with the encouragement of their health visitor. Clearly for them, formal 'classes' were not the first stage. Confidence and friendship were built up gradually through a series of eight Thursday morning parent/child outings in the minibus – again to the farm, the airport, the Forth Road Bridge. It was out of that experience that by the end of October, Wendy Dignan suggested that the group meet to discuss issues relevant to themselves as parents. 'Learning Together' was launched and in the weeks that followed a group of eight mothers (seven single parents) discussed together some topics on the Open University course 'Learning Through Experience', for example: children's play and housing problems; do we handle our children as our mothers handled us?; teaching children about sex. In January 1986 the group visited the Hillend ski slope and followed it up by discussing how to develop a winter theme with children at home and at the Centre.

These then were some of the Under-Fives activities in the last months of 1985. But who was involved? Who were the clientele? Where did they come from? What did they come for and how much were they involved?

The users*

A. Housing Area

By January 1986 there were 86 families (106 children) on the register of the Under-Fives Centre. Most came from areas within walking distance of the school. 13% came from outside the area, one indeed travelling from the centre of Edinburgh.

B. The children: ages, older siblings, time at the Centre, pattern of attendance

Children's ages at 31st December 1985 ranged from 3 months to 4 years 9 months, but over two-thirds were probably in the age-range 2.00 to 4.00 years. There were only seven children under the age of one year. Seventeen children had had older siblings at the Centre before them.

Only 18% of children came three or more times per week, 26% came once or twice, 56% less than once a week. Only five children below the age of 2.00 years came three times a week or more and all babies came less than once a week. There was a constant turnover of children and families: 80% had been coming to the Centre for less than a year, 56% for less than six months. Conversely 8% had been coming for over two years.

C. Numbers attending the Centre

Numbers attending the Centre were consistently greater in the morning than in the afternoon partly because afternoons were often given over to special interests, e.g. jumping beans, keep fit, etc. Over some

* References to the appendices in the original report have been omitted

70 mornings and 63 afternoons in the period August to December 1985 there were 28 mornings with 15+ children present (7 with 20+) only 5 afternoons with that number. Conversely there was only one morning with fewer than 5 children, but on 26 afternoons there were 5 or fewer present.

D. The adults

Of the 106 children attending the Centre, 89 were brought by their mother only, one by both mother and father, one by both mother and childminder, 15 by a childminder alone. Twenty-one mothers and four childminders were single parents. Thirty-two per cent had come initially in order to attend school classes, 68% had started by 'dropping in'. Whatever their initial reason for coming, the great majority had become involved in something else.

Regularity of individual adults at each main activity

School classes:	49 attended school classes, 57 did not (9% all the time, 15% regularly, 25% occasionally, 54% never)
Swimming:	34 attended, 72 did not (15% all the time, 6% regularly, 11% occasionally, 68% never)
Jumping beans:	22 attended, 84 did not (7% all the time, 9% regularly, 5% occasionally, 79% never)
Outings:	20 attended, 86 did not (12% all the time, 5% regularly, 2% occasionally, 81% never)
Toy library:	26 attended, 80 did not (17% all the time, 1% regularly, 7% occasionally, 76% never)

Dropping in:	All 'dropped in' in some capacity (27% all the time 14% regularly, 13% occasionally, 45% only very occasionally)
Discussion group: (U-Fives Centre)	30 attended over the year, 76 did not (19% all the time, 6% regularly, 3% occasionally, 72% never)
Discussion group: (School)	12 attended, 94 did not (9% all the time, 2% regularly, 89% never)

Pattern of involvement in the Centre

In the 15 week period from 30th August 1985 there were between 21 and 42 attendances at school classes in any one week. In the same period in any one week there were between 5 and 35 'dropping in' attendances where adults came to the playroom to play with their children, and between 16 and 45 of all other attendances (swimming, jumping beans, courses) taken together. These figures do not, of course, take account of where the same people were involved in several activities at different points in the week. It is interesting to note that by late 1985 the number of attendances for school classes was consistently less than the number of attendances for all other Under-Fives activities taken together. Sometimes indeed the difference is very marked. The number of 'attendances' at the Under-Fives Centre in any one week was normally about 80 to 100.

Other points of interest in relation to adult involvement

Long-term attenders

Of the 22 mothers who had come to the Centre for over a year, 16 had come initially for school classes and all still attended, three had come originally for another purpose but now also attended classes. All eight who had come for over two years had come originally for classes and still attended, three 'all the time', the others regularly or occasionally.

Most frequent attenders

There were 11 mothers who attended three or more activities 'almost all the time'. Seven of these had

started by coming to classes, four started by 'dropping in'. Of these 11 very frequent attenders, five were single parents.

In addition, 38 mothers/childminders attended two activities 'almost all the time'. Of these 14 had started by coming to classes, 18 by 'dropping in', six (childminders) by coming to the toy library.

Least frequent attenders

There were 36 mothers involved in only one activity, two of them mothers who only attended classes. The other 34 were also the least frequent users; 27 had come to 'drop in' and 24 had been on the register for less than two months. Half were from West Pilton.

Single parents

Of the 25 single parents and single childminders, five were among the eleven most frequent users of the Centre (see above). In contrast, nine were among the least frequent users. Of the 21 mothers, 19 started by 'dropping in', two by attending school classes. Four who started by 'dropping in' were now attending classes regularly or occasionally and the two who started with classes were also dropping in frequently.,

These then are the raw figures, but they tell us little about the reality of the people and the activities behind the facts. A few brief snapshots may help to give a more comprehensive picture.

The reality – some episodes, large and small

A) Monday, 8.45 a.m. and the playroom is set out ready for another week; the water is back in the water tray, paper is pegged to the painting easels, the dolls are lying down, the books are standing up, the pink (very pink) dough is pristine fresh and somebody has decided to cheer up Monday morning with a huge bunch of flowers. There's just time for a quick cup of coffee for the staff before the first families arrive. The kettle has just boiled when a door opens and bangs along the

corridor and two pairs of feet, one large, one small, approach.

Wendy gets up and goes to the door of the parents' room: the coffee is abandoned. 'Good morning, Karen* good morning, Jane – it's good to see you'. The small feet run and quickly climb the steps to the parents' room: a face no more than three feet from the floor peers in and beams. 'Hello, Karen' says everyone else and Karen beams back. She comes to the Centre most days as her mother attends school classes: she is quite at home. This morning Karen's mother Jane obviously has something on her mind: Wendy senses this and moves with her to a far part of the playroom. Meantime Karen and Grace are deep in conversation. The dolls too have started another week.

B) There are around 16 children in the room mostly aged two to three and all happily engaged playing on their own or with an adult. Three mothers come into the room chatting together. Fiona, a two year-old, grabs a book and makes straight for one of the mothers who immediately sits down on the floor, Fiona on her lap, book at the ready. They turn the pages together and Fiona laughs uproariously (it's 'The Hungry Caterpiller', I think) as she peeps to see what is coming on the next page. I have assumed that this picture is a reflection of what the two will do at home. I am wrong. It is not Fiona's mother. Her mother is not there. Her substitute 'mother' has a child of her own but he is quite oblivious to Fiona and he hasn't noticed his mother as he comes to terms with an obstinate toilet roll funnel which refuses to stick to his junk model train.

* Names of all mothers and children are fictitious but all episodes are real.

C) A particularly busy morning. No obvious reason for that but there are over 20 children in the playroom – all ages. A few mothers are helping Wendy and Addie but while it is all under control there are not really enough adults around. Four mothers are having coffee and a cigarette next door apparently oblivious to the need. Wendy and Addie exchange glances of frustration (is it exasperation?) as Wendy goes next door. If it is exasperation it comes across in neither the tone nor the words. 'We're a bit harassed. We really need you. Could two of you come when you've finished your coffee?' Two rise immediately and willingly.

D) Caroline is obviously in a bad mood. She's the oldest child in the Centre, comes most days and has been coming for two years. But most of the other children today are too young to be company for her and she's bored. Addie from the other side of the room picks up the warning signs and moves fast. 'Caroline, I need somebody to help carry a few things outside. Would you be able to help?'

E) Peter is 2½. He is gazing in wonder at two long shaped pieces of wood with straps and buckles lying side by side on the playroom floor. They weren't there yesterday. What can they be? Alison, aged 3, runs across and with great glee and no hesitation slips her feet on top of the strange objects and into the straps and lifts two equally puzzling 'sticks', one in each hand. Wendy joins them quickly. The wooden objects are skis lent by the school's outdoor education department as a reminder of last week's visit to the Hillend ski slope. Alison went on that trip and she remembers it well. She and Wendy talk about all the things they saw and did. She draws my attention to the pictures they've made about snow. Peter demands to stand on the strange objects and Alison is persuaded to let him have a turn. He does not, however, share her enthusiasm.

61

Unimpressed, he moves off to explore something new.

F) Maureen is a single parent with two children, the younger Mark just a year old. Maureen enjoys her children: she lives nearby and she comes most days. She is usually in the playroom, seldom bothering to go to the parents' room for coffee. She plays constantly with both children. She has just realised that Mark has been intently watching his big sister paint at the easel. Would he like a go? An overall is supplied and seated on his mother's knee Mark achieves a solid line of black paint from the top of the paper to the bottom. He loses his grasp of the brush and much to his surprise gives himself a black eye.

G) 12.25 p.m. Tidying up time, everyone's busy and there's plenty still to do. A mother slips into the playroom, almost unnoticed, glances round and moves to the corner of the room where the painting easels stand and where the floor gives ample proof that today red has been the 'colour of the day'. She picks up the floor mop as she goes. Five minutes later the floor is cleaned, the rest of the room is tidied, the mother has a quick word with Wendy and Grace and she departs – alone. She has no child to collect (her child is now at primary school), she has no ostensible reason to come to the Centre, but being in the school anyway to attend a class she has just looked in to say 'hullo'.

H) Tracy is only just 2. Her mother, a single parent, has just found the Centre and drops in most days. She admits that she still prefers the parents' room to the playroom. Tracy loves it all, tries everything and grins most of the time. Today she's outside on the climbing frame; up the ladder, down the chute, boundless energy. A moment of inattention and she falls heavily striking her head on the bars of the frame. It is a blow that would fell many a 4-

year-old. There is a moment's silence 'Ah bumped ma heid' she grins, and runs off.

I) Four children aged 2 to 3 sit round a table silently waiting for their juice and the cakes which they have just helped two of the mothers to make. A new child joins them and I hover in the background. Grace approaches with the juice and cakes and pauses as the children look expectantly 'Do you know Jane?' (the new child) she asks the others. 'And this is Joyce.' 'Joyce, this is Mark, David and Leanne'. Introductions complete, juice is served.

J) Toy library morning – plenty of people around and lots of toddlers. Play, coffee, chat and mutual support for all age groups. Everybody seems to know everybody else and there's plenty of noisy camaraderie. The two mother 'organisers' joke at their own 'inefficiency' in 'balancing the books'. Around the coffee table one mother has just announced she's 'expecting'; the sympathy seems to outweigh the congratulations but it's all tongue-in-cheek. Grace, however, ever-sensitive to everyone's needs and moods has picked up something I haven't. 'It's been a good morning but we must work harder to make people feel welcome. It's so important to them.'

K) There's a strong sweet smell of baking in the playroom. Earlier that morning two mothers have helped a small group of 3-4 year-olds bake some biscuits evidently much to everyone's satisfaction because all that remains are a few crumbs and that tantalising smell. Two of the children who had helped have gone straight to the wendy house where the whole process is about to be re-enacted in an imaginary game. 'Get the bowl', orders one 'I'll get the spoon'. 'You'll need sugar and flour, but we haven't any raisins. Some 'raisins' are produced as if by magic, the 'mixture' is pushed, pulled and cut and triumphantly put in the 'oven'. An inquisitive toddler peeps through the screen

of the wendy house and is seized upon as a willing guest. The 'biscuits' are enjoyed by all. Grace passes and enquires if she may join the party. 'Tell me what you've been making', she invites, and there follows an exchange about recipes, ovens, and burned biscuits.

L) Barbara and Frances are on their knees doing a large jigsaw on the floor. Barbara is a single parent. Frances at 2½ is her only child. As she later tells me 'Frances is all I've got. She's my whole life and I didn't want a place for children alone.' Patiently the two go through three jigsaws together, Barbara encouraging and occasionally suggesting, but Frances ultimately finding most of the pieces herself. It is no mean achievement for a child of her age. 'She's quite bright' says Barbara trying not to look too proud.

M) 'Well – that's all arranged.' A mother blows into the parents' room first thing in the morning. 'A group of them (other mothers) are coming to help me paper my room next week. It's high time: the damp's taken the paper right off but I hadn't the heart to do anything about it before.' There follows (for my benefit) a long tragic story of family illness and death.

N) Scott who is 4 is standing alone at a table on which there are displayed some leaves, grasses and nuts. His pockets are bulging. With great pride he starts to empty them. His mother is hovering in the background. Wendy's attention is caught. She exchanges a knowledgeable wink with mother and the two approach Scott as he takes his treasures from his pocket. 'What lovely nuts' says Wendy. 'Where did you get those?' And so starts a three-way conversation about a Saturday walk.

O) Swimming. Eight mothers, three staff, two students – and bobbing around on inflatable wings and rubbers rings ten tiny bodies, one very

tiny one, only six months old. A look of anticipation from every adult, an unselfconscious beam from every child. Well, almost every child: one two-year-old has decided it's too cold. Kick, splash, float. Feel the water on your body, the support of your mother, the trust of your child: know the individual achievement of a few faltering strokes, the group fun of water games played together. Ring-a-ring-of-rosies and we all fall down – and it's time to get dressed. Back to the Centre for a baked potato.

and finally –

P) Alex's discussion group: the topic – separation and divorce. It's a personal and traumatic topic for several in the group – that's probably why they've chosen it. Eight of the ten present are mothers from the Under-Fives Centre. Alex leads the discussion unobtrusively and skillfully. Almost everyone speaks. Loneliness, financial problems, rejection, they're all aired. Most complain they have no social life as they have nobody to look after the children. One disagrees. She has a partner although she refuses to be married. She has two very young children, is quite content with her lot and rejects any offers to babysit. 'I enjoyed myself when I was young' she says. 'I've had my life.' She is 23.

Process

We move now to an analysis of some of the principles which seemed to underpin the Craigroyston Under-Fives programme as it was operating in 1985. What seemed to be the key factors in the Under-Fives educational 'process'? Six are outlined briefly.

The first need only be stated but it is of fundamental importance. Craigroyston 1985 was the accumulation of five years experiences; success and failure, triumph and frustration. Each stage was the product of what had gone before: it had been a gradual process of growth and change, experiment and appraisal. The Under-Fives Centre had been and continued to be an evolving creature.

Second, and central to the whole philosophy, was the principle that:

> 'It is by taking as its focus neither the child nor the parent but the parent-child system that parent intervention apparently achieves its effectiveness and staying power'. (Bronfenbrenner 1976)

Allied to that went the belief that:

> 'The failure of one individual at either generational level may impede the other's capacity to adapt'. (Rapoport 1975)

Tripartite commitment

Hence there was a tripartite commitment: to the needs of the child; to the needs of the mother; to the needs of the mother and child together. The education of children was central to the whole process. All the activities of the Centre which involved children were firmly based on a professional commitment to their

total development as individuals whatever their stage or level of maturity; their language, thinking, social and imaginative skills as well as their emotional and physical growth. But there was also a clear recognition that mothers too had their individual needs: for some it was simply the need for encouragement to pursue their own individual needs in the school without feeling any sense of guilt; for others it was a need for social and emotional support before they got anywhere near that stage. And in recognition of the mutual dependence of mother and child there was also the continuing encouragement to mothers to spend time in the playroom with their children, to take part in child/parent activities such as swimming or outings or to attend any part of the continuing programme of parent-related courses.

Reaction to needs

Third, there was a commitment to react to people and their needs: a recognition that people came before a programme. Hence parents could use the Centre as and how they wanted and there was an unspoken understanding that everyone was welcome whenever they returned and no explanation was ever sought for a long period of absence. Equally the strains and tensions of life in the Greater Pilton/Muirhouse area were often evident on the faces of mothers: family stress often traumatic, was part of the daily life of the Centre. These were needs which the staff and other parents were quick to recognise and to which they were quick to respond.

Balance

Fourth, there was a fine balance between 'structure' and 'flexibility' in the whole process. In one sense the Centre was free of many of the constraints which operate for many pre-school establishments. Being situated in a comprehensive school and with mothers on hand there was no formal requirement for registration, regular attendance, or conformity to standard rules and regulations. This in itself meant, as we have already said, that there was greater freedom to respond quickly to need and to tolerate widely divergent patterns of attendance. It also meant that the Centre could respond quickly to an emergency – for

example, a request from a health visitor on behalf of a family in particular need.

Structure

Nevertheless the Centre did operate within a very deliberate if subtle structure. The aims and objectives of the Centre laid down in the original proposal for the Curriculum Project's funding were still adhered to: progress, achievements and failures were continuously monitored and analysed. Just as important, there had been a structure built up over the years through key activities in the Centre: the discussion groups; swimming and jumping beans sessions; outings. With these key activities went a core group of people, perhaps some 20 mothers, who attended very regularly, who knew one another well and who inevitably were the ones who provided the continuity and their own stamp on the Centre's identity.

There was also an important dimension of 'structure', built up through the sheer skill of the staff. Their 'structure' was there in the general control, and their overall perception of where the Under-Fives Centre was trying to go. It was this implicit professional structure which made the flexibility of the Centre a strength rather than a weakness.

Stress

Fifth, the Under-Fives Centre operated in the knowledge that many of those who used it came lacking confidence in themselves, often from situations of personal and family stress sometimes quite traumatic in nature. The repercussions were often evident in the behaviour of children. The implications in terms of the 'process' were many. There was an emphasis on a relaxed atmosphere whenever possible. Some mothers expected very little of themselves or of others so goals were limited and all achievements were recognised. While mothers were encouraged to share their problems and their stress they were also encouraged to be positive by becoming actively involved in a school or Centre activity. Stress was something shared and the strain of that sometimes showed in the staff, something which the most sensitive mothers recognised and responded to with a

spontaneous joke, a cup of tea or a quick unselfconscious hug.

Belief in professionalism

Sixth, and last, the Under-Fives Centre was based on a belief in professionalism, and in particular the professionalism of nursery education. We have already stressed the commitment from the beginning to appointing both a nursery teacher and a nursery nurse of experience and ability. Everyone agreed that they had provided a professional leadership of high quality and that the Centre had a staff who worked well as a team exploiting one another's strengths and compensating for one another's weaknesses. Wendy Dignan's position as a teacher in the Centre, her active teaching role in the child-care course in the early days, and latterly her guidance role as an Assistant Principal Teacher (Guidance) probably also gave her personally and the team as a whole professional credibility among other school staff.

A distinction should be made however between the quality of the professionalism in the Under-Fives Centre and the nature of that professionalism. This is a crucial point as it seems to explain in part the divergence of views in relation to the Centre. While its quality was unquestioned, and while it had many growth points which went well beyond what might be found in most conventional nursery schools, the professionalism of the Under-Fives Centre was firmly rooted in the professional assumptions of nursery education, among them an institutional focus and a commitment to seeing children's needs as paramount. Not everyone accepted that model.

With that in mind, we turn now to how the Craigroyston community viewed the Under-Fives Centre.

Perceptions

Having outlined the thinking behind the Under-Fives Centre, the main principles and processes on which its practice was based, it is important now to look at how the Centre was perceived by those who knew it as users and also by those who simply knew of it as a

service within the Craigroyston community. We turn first to the general views of two particular groups, the mothers who used the Centre and the high school staff. Second, we look at specific aspects of the Centre: its clients and users; its contribution as a particular innovatory form of pre-school provision; its role within the 'community school', and we try to reflect the views not only of mothers and a wider group of school staff but also the views of a cross-section of those who ran alternative forms of pre-school groups in the same area, those who worked in local health and social work services and those who had a wider responsibility for educational provision in the Region as a whole.

Mothers' views of the Under-Fives Centre

Mothers' and childminders' views of the Centre were gathered almost entirely from unstructured interviews, most lasting around an hour. It is important to note that only two of the mothers interviewed formally were 'occasional' users of the Centre (using it less than once a week); most of those interviewed used it fairly regularly (once or twice a week), a few 'very regularly' (three or more times a week). Three mothers whose names were on the register and were only occasional users were approached for interview but two failed to keep the appointment on two occasions and one declined to be interviewed as she felt that she did not know enough about the Centre to make valid comments. Three mothers who were met casually in the course of visits to local primary schools turned out to be or to have been 'occasional users' of the Centre and they also provided a few comments. Thus the overall bias in the mothers' interviews is towards those who, judging by their record of attendance, seemed to get a lot out of using the Centre. What was it about the Centre then that made this group use it so regularly?

Many of the mothers wanted to emphasise the importance of the 'atmosphere' of the Under-Fives Centre and it is perhaps significant how many used the word 'relaxed'.

> 'They're so relaxed ... that's so important to mothers and children.'

'It's the relaxed atmosphere ... it's like a team'.

'The pressure's taken off you from your child... someone to lean on... maybe see an answer you can't see ... a big sigh of relief when I arrived at the Under-Fives Centre... I could totally relax'.

Part of the appeal was said to be that everyone was treated alike:

'Everybody's the same at the Under-Fives Centre'.

'There aren't any cliques – I don't know why, because every other place seems to have cliques'.

And everyone could share their problems:

'There's no need to pretend'.

'You can share your problems with anybody'.

As far as their children were concerned, these mothers were in no doubt about the benefits involved: they learned to play and share toys with other children of all ages; they learned to talk with adults; they had to share their mother with other children; they went on outings to places they would never see otherwise. The staff understood them completely. 'They go right into the children's world'. And one who initially had had reservations about what a 'creche' would be like had had her fears dispelled. 'I was impressed by the fact the child comes first'.

Many mothers of course emphasised the benefits they themselves felt. For some, it was the opportunity the Under-Fives Centre gave them to attend classes and find new interests and a new sense of achievement. For others, the Centre itself provided the opportunities:

'It's a lifesaver ... I needed contact with other adults'.

'They're often the only adults I speak to during the week'.

'This is my social life ... I can't afford any other social life'.

'It's given me a purpose'.

This perception of the Centre as giving them a new sense of purpose, a sense of identity within a social network perhaps for the first time in years, is perhaps the most common and certainly one of the strongest reactions from the mothers themselves. One claimed that her own involvement in the Centre had had positive repercussions on the family as a whole:

'The atmosphere of the home has a lot to do with how the mother feels ... I'm now much livelier and happier .. My husband now says "What have you been doing today?" and I have something to tell him'.

Peacock and Crowther (1984) in their earlier study of the Centre had identified some jealousy and resentment on the part of husbands who, perhaps for the first time, saw their wives committed to their own interests outside the home. Among those involved in school classes there was also some hint of this in the present study, but it was normally dismissed in a jocular way and in terms of 'him' having to wait for his dinner or find it himself. But as laughter and jokes were a common defence mechanism against the most sensitive issues, it may well be that more tension lay behind these references than appeared on the surface.

Several mothers claimed that their involvement in the Centre had led them to see themselves and others differently. As far as their children were concerned, seeing them with other children they realised that many of their 'faults' or 'weaknesses' were shared with others of the same age and were part of their stage of development. They had learned also to recognise their children's strengths, and sharing the responsibility for even a short time allowed them to see the children differently. As one put it:

'It sneaks up on you that you can enjoy your kids'.

Seeing themselves differently basically meant that they had learned to recognise themselves as people as well as mothers – without guilt:

'I can be there as a person'.

'I used to feel guilty leaving him ... not now'.

'I believe that time to be myself is something I'm entitled to'.

'I think I'm a more interesting person now – and I'm sure I'm a better mother'.

Finally, a few mothers made the point implicitly that their involvement in the Centre had encouraged them to look again at the community itself. The point is best made in the report of the second year of the project where one mother writes that a bad press and a general prejudice towards the area as a whole had given her a negative outlook on the community generally and on those who lived in it. Involvement in the Under-Fives Centre made her realise how many there were like herself who wanted only the best for their families and were prepared to make great efforts towards achieving it. 'Community' had taken on a new meaning.

These then were the very positive comments from the regular users of the Centre. As outlined earlier, it proved possible to get only a few comments from more casual users. One said she went on the advice of the health visitor when 'Laura was getting on top of me'. Another went when a neighbour started but when the neighbour moved she stopped too. A third said it was 'too far to walk wi' two bairns*'. The impression given was certainly one of apathy rather than hostility. There were only two negative comments: one that 'the folk at the place are stuck up'; the other that it was 'a piece o'

* Children

nonsense that you could nae leave a bairn on his own – he'll no get pandered tae at the school'. But the general impression – and it was no more than that – given by these mothers, was that they used, or had used the Centre much as they would use any other 'service', if and when they had a particular need or if they happened to be passing. For whatever reason, they would be unlikely to want any regular or long-term involvement.

The views of school staff

As part of a day's school-based in-service programme in October 1985, a group of school staff watched the recently completed videofilm of the activities of the Under-Fives Centre. They were then asked to respond in writing to the following questions:

1. Before watching the videofilm today what did you see as the main function(s) of the Centre?

2. Has the video in any way changed your perception of what the Centre does? If so, how has it changed?

3. How important is an Under-Fives Centre in a community secondary school? Why do you say this?

4. How well did you know the Centre before today? Very well indeed? Reasonably well? Just a little? Not at all?

Questionnaires were completed voluntarily and anonymously. Forty-six were returned. Answers to questions 1, 2 and 4 (above) are summarised and outlined briefly below.

The great majority of staff claimed to know the Centre: five 'very well', 21 'reasonably well', 16 'just a little', and four 'not at all'. Of the four (possibly new) staff who did not know the Centre at all, two had only heard about it, one had seen it from the outside, one had 'peeped through the windows'.

Prior to watching the videofilm, by far the most important function which the staff had seen for the

Centre was as a place for parents to leave their children while they went to classes. Forty-three of the 46 referred to this in some way. Some were fairly dismissive. Its function was:

> 'to babysit while parents went to classes',
>
> 'as a dumping ground, I guess',
>
> 'a facility for looking after children of adult students'.

Others recognised the educational element for children:

> 'care and nursery education while mothers were at classes'.

Almost a quarter had also seen the Centre as having a function for children and parents together. It was about:

> '.... socialising children, adult education, an opportunity for adults to see children learn together'.
>
> '.... providing an opportunity for parents and children to learn together and a place for adults to leave children'.

Only one member of staff mentioned having seen the Centre as an educational opportunity for school students 'giving school students an opportunity to work with young kids'..

Having watched the film, 20 members of staff said their perception of the Centre had changed: 18 felt they understood it better and felt more positive towards it; two felt their expectations had been disappointed.

Typical comments of those whose perceptions had become more positive were:

'There's more of an educational process going on than I had previously thought'.

'I didn't realise so many different activities went on'.

'I am much more aware of the varied and rich educational inputs'.

'There seems to be a more structured element than I had realised'.

Of the two whose previous expectations had been disappointed by watching the film, one thought the children were given less priority than she/he had assumed:

'Perhaps the video was not a fair reflection of the Centre's work. The children seemed to be very secondary to the parents' interests'.

The other was surprised at how little emphasis there had been on school students. 'Giving school students an opportunity to work with young kids does not appear to be a consideration'.

Of the 26 who said the film had not changed their perception of the Centre and its work, 15 claimed that they had simply had their positive feelings towards the Centre and their understanding of its work confirmed. The other 11 also had had their expectations confirmed. As far as they were concerned the film had simply confirmed their perception of the Centre as 'the same as any other pre-school group' or 'just another creche'.

Perceptions of the Centre's clients and users

Among all those who worked in the Craigroyston area, the most common general perceptions of young mothers who lived there was first that they were women who lived with and under stress of all kinds, second that they lacked confidence both in themselves and in life generally. The pressure on day care facilities was enormous and the criteria for a place in a day care centre or in family day care were so stringent that large

numbers who needed some support simply could not get it:

> 'Many get no break ... many are on their own ... there's stress of all kinds ... often not enough to warrant day care but they desperately need support' (pre-school coordinator).

> 'Women here don't look for much ... they've no confidence things will come to anything ... there are major crises in their lives happening all the time and along with that go low income and poor housing' (community worker).

> 'Many have little confidence in themselves ... they put their own limits and boundaries on where they feel secure' (assistant headteacher, primary school).

Within this general picture, there was the suggestion from several quarters that while the Under-Fives Centre might attract women under personal stress, it was unlikely to attract the least confident, partly because of its setting in a school:

> 'Programmes of schools attract only a certain type of person ... they are marginal to many ...'

and partly because of its image as a place where people went to 'do something for themselves':

> 'Under-Fives women have made a conscious decision to do something ... they've had to think it through and make a commitment' (social worker).

> 'They're those interested in bettering themselves' (teacher).

A few suspected that many of those who used the Centre were either not from the area or certainly were not typical of it:

> 'I recognise so few – why?' (teacher)

'I'd expected children here to be like the Craigmiller and Niddrie children – they're not' (nursery nurse student)

'A lot don't come from the area ... they're all well spoken'.

Even if this were true, however, it was not necessarily seen as regrettable:

'Too many vulnerable people is wrong' (health visitor)

'Some gatekeeping by the more affluent confident women is inevitable ... is it not sometimes good?' (community worker)

Certainly some of the core group who had used the Centre and the school regularly over a period of time reflected at least an outward confidence and assurance far removed from the general picture of apathy and insecurity painted by those who knew the community well. Whatever the perception of other people, at least some of these mothers themselves claimed that their 'confidence' was not the starting point but the result of their involvement in the Centre and the school as a whole.

There were two obvious gaps among the Centre's users: the first was men, the second was teenage mothers.

Of all the 106 children on the register in January 1986, only one was sometimes brought by a father who stayed to play with the child. A few fathers, it is true, had attended the Centre and taken part in its activities in the past. While no-one could deny the lack of fathers at the Centre, perception of its importance varied greatly. As a broad generalisation it seemed that those who were most concerned about it were the professional men: the administrators, teachers, community workers. Those who saw it as regrettable but inevitable and a relatively low priority for concern

were the professional women. Those who seemed to find it either irrelevant or were sometimes even hostile to the idea of trying to involve more men were the mothers themselves. Most felt that while men were now more willing to play with and look after their young children they were still more likely to do this at home than 'in public' particularly in a place like a nursery which was still seen as 'women's work'. Mothers also felt that the presence of men in any great number would change the Centre for them. At the very least it would no longer be the 'relaxed' place they enjoyed.

As far as teenage mothers were concerned, it was generally agreed that this was an expanding group, that few of them used the Centre (or any other form of pre-school provision), and that as a group they probably had very particular and distinctive needs. But it was also recognised that because of the Centre's school setting it was probably difficult for teenagers to accept it. As one teacher put it, 'I'd say they need to distance themselves for a year'. The school student of 15 or 16 was perhaps, in one sense, little different from the mother of 16 or 17, but in other ways there had to be a total readjustment of perception and expectation on everybody's part. That took time.

Perceptions of the Centre as an innovatory form of pre-school provision

We turn now to how the Under-Fives Centre was viewed in the context of other pre-school provision in the area.

i) The Under-Fives Centre and the education of children

The education of children was at the heart of the work of the Under-Fives Centre. This was the perception of the Centre staff themselves and it was certainly the perception of most teachers interviewed in the schools in the area who saw the Centre providing nursery education on the lines they provided it themselves but with a wider age-group and with some emphasis on adult classes. Most health visitors and social workers too, although their first concern was generally with the

73

support and education in the broad sense available to the mother, recognised also the quality of educational experiences provided for the children.

There were, however, two groups who seemed in some doubt about what the education of pre-school children really meant. First, some of the mothers.

Certainly mothers were in little doubt about the general quality of provision made for children at the Centre: all spoke warmly about how much their children had learned. There was, however, some uncertainty about what, more specifically, the education of children was all about at this stage and they assumed that their children would later need a 'proper nursery'.

In the same way, secondary staff were often hazy about what the 'education' as distinct from the 'care' of pre-school children meant, and the notions of 'babyminding' or 'looking after children' were not uncommon. Certainly those members of staff who had contributed their own expertise to the work of the Centre as specialists in music, art, outdoor education, biology, etc. had become interested and more aware of the meaning of 'nursery education', but for the great majority whose involvement with the Centre was inevitably spasmodic and largely second-hand, misunderstandings not surprisingly persisted.

These misunderstandings and ambiguities were often a major source of frustration to the Under-Fives Centre staff. Like all professional staff in pre-school education they resented but had learned to live with the general image of their role as 'minders' of children. In the present study, for example, the teacher in the local college of further education who ran a pre-school group for the children of students and staff commented wryly in the context of her own setting: 'They don't value nursery education, (when the staff came across) they were amazed to see that it was structured in any way'.

50

The Under-Fives staff in Craigroyston had the added frustration of realising that where the education of children was ill-understood and perhaps undervalued, the main purpose and contribution of the Centre was seen in terms of its benefits to adults. This was a major frustration to a staff whose priorities and professional background, despite their commitment to parents, were firmly rooted in the education of children.

ii) The Under-Fives Centre compared with other forms of provision

Inevitably the Under-Fives Centre was compared with other forms of pre-school provision. Two members of the secondary school staff who had had experience of nursery education elsewhere were clearly impatient with the image of the Centre as novel and innovatory. To them it was 'just like any other nursery school' and while 'some see it as different, I don't'.

One mother whose child attended the Centre regularly and who came from well outside the area would have disagreed with that strongly. She had made comparisons with other groups in her area and concluded:

> 'I've looked at things locally, but the Under-Fives Centre is a very hard act to follow'.

Another mother agreed:

> 'Once you've been to the Under-Fives Centre, you're spoiled for going anywhere else'.

Nevertheless, as we have already indicated, many mothers thought they might send their children eventually to a 'proper nursery'. This was because nursery school would be a 'training for school' or it would give them a chance to meet those who would eventually be their classmates in primary school. Some, however, fully intended also to maintain their connection with the Under-Fives Centre using it less often but maintaining what they saw as an important

link both for the children and themselves. In session 1985-1986 there were already a few who used the Centre as well as a nursery class or playgroup, a practice which some administrators were unhappy with. The staff in the Centre were ambivalent: they felt it was legitimate as long as the 'other' approach was broadly similar to their own, but not otherwise. As far as schools were concerned, often they did not know that the child was attending the Under-Fives Centre as well, but where they did know they seemed to accept it unquestioningly.

Possibly the group who felt most strongly about the Under-Fives Centre in relation to other groups were the childminders. Several mentioned that the welcome and support they got from the Under-Fives Centre was unique:

> 'In the mother and toddler group I feel an outcast'.
>
> 'Nurseries and playgroups generally don't want us'.
>
> 'The Under-Fives Centre is the only place I can go and not feel I have horns'.

Some parents compared their own involvement at the Centre with the role they saw themselves as having in other groups. Those responsible for the development of education in the Region generally emphasise that 'parent involvement' is part of Regional policy for every school and all schools should be working towards this end. Certainly in the Craigroyston area it is clear that there are both schools which have been working towards parent involvement in a wide variety of ways over many years, and there are others where the picture is very different. These differences are reflected in the comments of Under-Fives mothers:

> 'It's a great school and we can get involved as much as we want – just like the Centre here'.
>
> 'At the nursery, I know all the kids' names, none of the mothers'.

'They (teachers in the nursery/primary school) see you as bringing their work to them. Bring the child, admire the pictures, take them home'.

These last two comments of course reflect schools where teachers consider that what they term 'too much parent involvement' will interfere with what they perceive as their main priority, working with children. This sentiment comes across clearly in the comment of one teacher who, drawing what she perceived as a contrast between her own setting and the Under-Fives Centre declared:

'Our first priority is to our children'.

And by way of explanation:

'As long as a parent is in the room, the child is never really independent'.

Health visitors and social workers made their own comparisons. In contrast particularly to some of the day care provision, the Under-Fives Centre was seen as 'positively rather than negatively oriented'. It was seen as more flexible than any other group and, linked to that, also more open to its users. The Family Care Unit saw it as a stepping stone for some of its own families where mothers who had come to the Unit depressed and insecure had developed some of the confidence and relative independence which they saw as being necessary for users of the Under-Fives Centre.

Finally, in the course of Wendy Dignan's first visits to other pre-school groups in the area early in 1981 there had been some feeling that established pre-school groups were sceptical of the need for more provision for under-fives and their families and were even worried that the viability of their own groups might be threatened (Working Party minute 25.2.81). By 1985 there was no indication of this kind of thinking: the Under-Fives Centre had established a legitimate place for itself and, just as important, it was recognised as

playing an increasingly important role within a growing pre-school network.

The Under-Fives Centre as a training resource for school students

We have already remarked at several points on how the expectations of the Under-Fives Centre as a training resource for school students had over the years been modified until, in 1985, it was no longer a major priority for the Centre's work. Here we simply report briefly on some of the perceptions of why this had happened.

It proved possible to talk to only three students, but even this small group represented a very wide range of perceptions. One enjoyed every minute of her involvement at the Centre: she had grown up in a home where there were always children around – her mother was a childminder in the area; she liked children and related well to them and she hoped one day to do a nursery nurse training. Another felt neither positively nor negatively towards the Centre: it was 'OK', the folk were 'OK', the kids were 'cheeky', but she would go back again. It had been 'OK'.

The third was more forthcoming and it was she, perhaps, who provided the best clues about why the experience was unsatisfactory to many, staff as well as students. First, she was very young – only 13. It was clear that she had herself quite enjoyed playing with the equipment and materials at the Centre but she felt that was 'silly' for someone of her age. Most of the children she found too young to relate to and she felt best with the mature 4-year-olds. On the other hand, they could be cheeky. In her terms there was not enough for her to do at the Under-Fives Centre and yet she resented it when any of the staff suggested something to her. The central point seemed to be that for her at least there was no sense of personal achievement in working with very young children. In contrast, she had thoroughly enjoyed a spell working with old people because 'you get to do their hair'.

Staff had their own explanations. First, and most important, the students who came to the Centre were

often of very low ability and they had difficulty whatever they did. Second, students on 'community' courses wanted to get away from the environment of the school. Third, either because there were often a lot of adults around in the Centre or because the number of children could be unpredictably low, sometimes there was not enough to do for students to feel that they were busily occupied.

The Centre certainly had advantages. The staff in the Centre tried through courses, visits, etc. to interest the students and to integrate their experience at the Centre with other school work; it could be used as a 'first stage' for more difficult students; it could take students for an odd hour, something not possible elsewhere. Nevertheless, one member of the school staff who was concerned with the placement of students on community courses felt that the disadvantage of unpredictable numbers outweighed the advantages particularly as there was a wide variety of acceptable alternatives in the area. 'What I look for is a busy friendly place and there's plenty of those around here'.

Perceptions of the Under-Fives Centre as part of the community school

Comments in this section were confined almost entirely to school staff.

When staff were asked how important it was for a community school to have an under-fives facility 43% said it was 'crucial', 'essential' or 'vital', 40% that it was 'very important', 17% that it was 'important' or 'useful'.

By far the most common reason given was that it provided an opportunity for adults to attend classes:

> 'Extremely important ... as a teacher of adult classes ... the numbers would drop dramatically if it didn't exist'.
>
> 'Some kind of creche facility is necessary if adults are to have the opportunity to attend day classes'.
>
> 'It's essential ... it provides the opportunity for parents of under-fives to take advantage of the

community school. They are at once our most receptive market and the least able to take advantage of the school without its help'.

Sixteen of the 46 respondents, however, made some kind of comment which related the Under-Fives Centre to the concept of the community school as a whole.

'It's very important ... it gives the community secondary school a central role in the community'.

'It's very important in beginning the concept of the parents' role in education'.

'It's doubtful if we could develop the community school without it. The parents pass on information in a wide net'.

And the headteacher put it most strongly:

'The community school would have no meaning if you shut that down'.

Many saw the community role which the Centre actually played as very valuable. It had the atmosphere created by the more positive aspects of community: it was 'warm' and 'caring' ('the words came to me because they use them' – assistant headteacher). The adult involvement in the Centre, Wendy Dignan's 'guidance' role and her place in the continuing education department were seen as important. It was recognised that the Under-Fives mothers had become a key group in the community school as a whole and that they had spearheaded some of its developments. Apparently small things such as mothers and young children having lunch with staff and school students in the dining hall or mothers using what had once been the school 'staffroom' were thought to have stamped the image of the Centre on the school and it was an image generally welcomed.

There were also the critics. First, some saw the Under-

Fives Centre as occupying too prominent a place in terms of the resources and general image of the school, privileged and favoured in ways the rest of the school was not. One much-cited example was the introduction in 1985 of a general system of payment for all adult activities in the school. Only the disabled, the unemployed and those on social security were exempt. There was however no payment asked for the use of the Under-Fives Centre, a point of principle on which the Under-Fives staff felt strongly (although Under-Fives parents did of course pay for other school activities with which they were involved). This exemption of the Under-Fives Centre from what was a hotly disputed development for the rest of the school was seen by some as discriminatory and yet another example to them of the generally privileged position which the Centre was thought to enjoy. Behind this perception was perhaps the mistaken assumption on the part of some staff that some of the resources spent on the Under-Fives Centre could be diverted to the rest of the school. But that, of course, would have been out of the question anyway since the Under-Fives Centre was separately and specifically funded by the Van Leer Foundation. These critics, rightly or wrongly, also felt that the Under-Fives Centre also attracted a disproportionate share of visitors and attention from the outside world.

Second, there were those on the staff who had a 'community' bias themselves and felt the Centre was too insular: it was not concerned enough with 'difficult' groups in the area; it was too concerned with preserving the 'nursery school' image. There was a need for the Centre to play a more positive complementary role to some of the outreach activities which were now an integral part of the community school. Adult Basic Education was one example where the Under-Fives Centre might be more involved and there could be closer working relationships with other pre-school groups. Looking back over the first five years of the Centre's life with satisfaction and contemplating its future, one of its strongest supporters on the school staff also wondered uneasily

if the Under-Fives Centre could become an 'in-group'. 'I'd want it to be more radical' he said. 'It's too cosy'.

There was, however, an open acknowledgement that the Under-Fives Centre shared some basic problems with the rest of the school in trying to develop its outreach work. This kind of approach did not come easily to many teachers; schools as institutions still had poor images for many adults; and many adults had to surmount considerable psychological barriers of their own before anything offered by schools was seen as relevant to them. At the same time there was always the danger that any outreach work could degenerate into or be misinterpreted as 'takeover'; instead of 'reaching out' to community groups as groups might want, schools, anxious to develop their community role, sometimes consciously often unconsciously define their own terms and reach out almost like magnets drawing community groups into their own network. This fear was expressed explicitly by one pre-school playleader in the present study. 'I don't get too much encouragement to go across there', she said. 'There might be a takeover by the head'.

This chapter then has tried to show in broad terms how Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre was seen by a cross section of those who knew it from a variety of perspectives. We turn now to a more theoretical analysis of the work of the Centre and try to relate some of these perceptions to that analysis.

Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is about 'development': the development of children, adults, families, the high school and ultimately the community itself. There was no way in which the present research in the time available could look at the longitudinal development of even any one of these and, in any case, to have looked at any one in isolation would have been to deny the spirit of what the Centre is essentially about. Instead, we look at the conditions in which the positive development, particularly of young children and young families is most likely to take place and we ask to what extent these operate in Craigroyston. (For illustrative material we refer back to Chapter 2).

Conditions conducive to children's development

Some of the recent literature on the effects of different kinds of pre-school group experience provides us with important new clues about the kinds of conditions conducive to children's development. Barbara Tizard (1986), for example outlines recent research findings on factors influencing the quality of day care for young children. Two main points emerge.

First she notes a growing acceptance of the potential benefits for even very young children of having wider social experience of other children and adults:

> 'The evidence suggests that from the first year of life children can benefit from a variety of social contacts'.

While being very careful not to overstate the case she also acknowledges in the light of research evidence:

> 'Peer contacts can certainly give pleasure to young children especially after the first year of life. Children of the same age have something unique to offer each other which parents and even siblings cannot match. They are on an equal footing to an extent which cannot be the case with adults or even older children'.

More important, however, is Tizard's central point that day care for young children, whatever their age, can

83

only be successful to the extent that it is characterised by 'familiarity', 'responsiveness' and 'attachment'. By familiarity she means continuing regular involvement with the same adults and the same children (the importance of the latter, she argues, we probably underestimate). 'Responsiveness' implies an ability and motivation on the part of adults to respond intuitively to children as individuals and interact with them on the same basis ('Responsiveness requires one-to-one interaction'). 'Attachment' is the state achieved when a reciprocal emotional bond is established between the child and the caring adult as well as possibly with other children. Familiarity, responsiveness and attachment are closely related and inter-dependent. They are at the heart of good day care. Tizard concludes:

> '... there are clear potential benefits for young children from being part of a social network which includes adults other than their parents, children of the same age and younger and older children. Secondly ... these benefits are much greater if the relationships within them are marked by attachment, familiarity and responsiveness. These characteristics not only make for greater security for the children but facilitate levels of activity and play which may not be possible in their absence'.

The claim then is that not only are familiarity, responsiveness and attachment essential for good child care, but that without them higher levels of activity and play may be impossible – an important factor for any pre-school group which claims to have educational aims.

To what extent, then, might it be said that the Under-Fives Centre met Tizard's criteria for good quality child care? To what extent did it exemplify familiarity, responsiveness and attachment?

Responsiveness, attachment and familiarity

There can be no doubt about 'responsiveness' and 'attachment'. The 'episodes' outlined in Chapter 2 reflect at least something of this: the unfailing individual greeting to each child (episode A); the

attempts to make children aware of one another as individuals (episode I); the intuitive reaction to a child's mood (episode D); the following of an individual child's interest (episode N); these are the essence of 'responsiveness'. 'Responsiveness' was, too, the practical expression of an 'attachment' which was pervasive throughout the Centre. Bonds of identity, friendship, affection and mutual caring between adults and children, between children and between adults were beyond doubt to even a casual observer.

'Familiarity' is perhaps the only concept which might be queried for some children in the Centre. There was of course a basic familiarity in the shape of the permanent staff and this was crucial. Two of the staff had in fact been there right from the beginning.

What was much less predictable, however, was the presence of other children or adults, given that the freedom to 'drop in' was a major feature of the Centre. Since there were many casual and short-term users this may have raised problems of 'familiarity' for some of these children although it was never mentioned by parents. Some aspects of the Centre's work did, of course, assume that there would be a commitment to regular attendance (at, for example, swimming, jumping beans, outings, courses). It was clear that the 'familiarity' generated by these occasions or by regular attendance in the playroom developed into friendship patterns for both children and adults which were obvious in the Centre itself and probably extended into wider networks in the outside community as relationships were built up. The issue of 'familiarity' remains a real one, however, for the casual user.

Our conclusion so far, however, is that the Under-Fives Centre does, on present evidence, seem to meet the main criteria of good quality child care and that that is the prerequisite for the next stage which is the educational development of children. As we have emphasised throughout, the Centre is about both the education and care of children, and it was because education was seen to be important that the original

working party had been adamant that the Centre should be under the leadership of a nursery teacher of some experience. Having established then that the Under-Fives Centre provides good quality 'care', can we equally argue that it provides good pre-school 'education'?

What is good pre-school education? That is a question whose full answer is well beyond the scope of the present study, but again we can identify some of the generally accepted principles and examine briefly some of the current thinking in this field.

Traditional principles of pre-school education

The traditional principles of pre-school education in Britain were firmly established through the pioneers of nursery education, notably Margaret and Rachel McMillan and Susan Isaacs. Their work established a commitment in nursery education which has continued to the present day: first to the all-round development of children – their physical, emotional, social and imaginative growth as well as their language and thinking skills; second to a model of children's learning which emphasised the active exploration of their environment and practical experience of problem-solving in self-chosen activities. Pre-school learning was encapsulated in the concept of educational play.

Several decades and untold research projects later, these principles are still largely intact although some of their practical implications have been refined in terms of our growing knowledge of the psychology of children's learning. Two brief illustrations must suffice from recent work on the development of children's thinking skills.

Margaret Donaldson (1978) in her seminal work on the development of children's reasoning, emphasises the importance of young children becoming aware of their own thought processes, what she terms their 'reflective awareness':

> 'What is now at stake, however, is the child's more general awareness of his own thought processes – his self-awareness'.

One of the central roles of the adult then, will be to encourage that process in play situations to help children articulate problems, plan and explore possible solutions and examine the results of their efforts. As Donaldson puts it:

> '... a large part of the teacher's task may be to help children achieve efficient inner representations of the problem they are expected to tackle'.

Broadly similar kinds of findings seem to be coming from the long-term work on American projects from the sixties (Schweinhart *et al* 1986). That too seems to confirm that children learn best by the active exploration of their environment through play in which they will develop the confidence and understanding which come from making things, relating to others and solving problems by their own efforts. At the same time, however, it too suggests that to be effective in the long term, play must be 'guided' by an adult who will help the child plan, consider alternatives and examine later what took place. This seems to have much in common with Donaldson's 'reflective awareness'.

We return to the Under-Fives Centre. The variety of 'episodes' outlined in Chapter 2 should indicate the Centre's commitment to the total development of children: the opportunities for play to encourage physical, social, language and cognitive development. Equally it should be obvious that the Centre ran its activities for children in such a way that the principles of active learning through play were simply taken for granted. More particularly, however, can it be argued that the Centre exemplified the 'educational' principles outlined above?

We believe that it can. For example, if we consider episode E (Wendy's discussion of the skis and the visit to the Hillend ski slope with Alison and Peter) we see

here the careful articulation of what that day had been about, the recall of events and situations, the linking of the day's events with the pictures on the wall and the present experience of standing in real skis but in an imaginary world of snow. Similarly, if we look at episode K (Grace's discussion with the two 'bakers') we see a discussion of the planning process necessary to translate 'ingredients' through a recipe into 'biscuits', the need for an 'oven' and the possible consequences of leaving biscuits in the oven for too long. These are of course only two isolated examples of the sophisticated learning made possible for young children if their 'reflective awareness' is encouraged. Equally important, it must be stressed, is the reflective awareness of adults who understand the process taking place and who have the experience and knowledge to capitalise on each opportunity as it arises. Of course not every play activity lends itself to this kind of analysis or this kind of intervention on the part of adults – nor should it. As in so much work in pre-school education, the essence of success is in recognising opportunities for what they are:

> 'The essence of the teacher's art lies in deciding what help is needed in any given instance and how this help may best be offered'.
> (Donaldson, 1978)

In short then, in terms of what is now known about the development of children's learning, we are arguing that we see in Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre a reflection of sound educational principles in action as these are commonly understood.

Personal relations

But we would go further and link our discussion of the Under-Fives Centre with some contemporary writing on the social context of young children's learning. Even in 1978 Margaret Donaldson was saying that 'personal relations appear to form the matrix within which his (the pre-school child's) learning takes place'. More recent work seem to have confirmed that statement and added to it. Long-term American evidence from some pre-school projects of the sixties (e.g. Berrueta-

Clement *et al*, 1984) seems to suggest that pre-school experience, far from being irrelevant as some sceptics had previously claimed, did appear to have fairly major (if surprising) effects when these children reached their late teenage years. Those who had attended pre-school groups when compared with control groups who had not, were less likely to have needed remedial help in school, were more likely to have found employment, were more independent financially and had more positive aspirations for their future. In more conventional 'school' terms, however, there was no significant difference between the two groups: school achievement and IQ scores were broadly similar. In other words, what seemed to have happened was that children who had undergone certain kinds of pre-school experience had benefited because their attitudes to learning, their motivation and their self-concepts had been influenced.

While Woodhead (1985) in his analysis of the cross-cultural implications of these American studies for British nursery education warns us against making simplistic assumptions, he too concedes that there are important lessons to be learned by examining the social context in which young children's learning takes place:

> '... in order to explain the effectiveness of pre-school education we may need to look not only at the characteristics of the programme and the population to whom it was applied, but also at the social context of family and school processes both during the period of intervention and during the later stages of education'.

Rutter (1985) makes essentially the same point:

> 'The long-term educational benefits from positive school experiences stem less from what the children are specifically taught than from effects on children's attitudes to learning, their self-esteem and on their task orientation'.

95

In a recent paper Sylva (1986) goes as far as to suggest that:

> 'It might be useful for those concerned with early education to delve into the literature on the development of competence and coping rather than turning again and again to developmental theories on cognition and language'.

Learning to cope with stress

This seems to be a potentially crucial (if speculative) new strand in our attempts to understand the essential principles of pre-school education, particularly for those who live in disadvantaged areas. It is not in any sense that, for example, language or cognitive skills are being devalued, but, it is suggested, it is the nature of the social context in which those skills (and others) are learned that determines their effectiveness. It is the extent to which positive self-concepts and motivation are enhanced which makes the long-term benefits of pre-school education possible. Sylva (1986) reviewing the above developments makes a point which is particularly pertinent to the present study:

> 'It seems to me that effective pre-school programmes will be those which foster the competence needed for coping with stress'.

Rutter (1981) had made the same kind of suggestion and had even suggested that not only might learning to cope with stress in the early years promote resilience in the face of stress in later life, but the converse might also be true:

> 'Early events may operate by altering sensitivities to stress or in modifying styles of coping which then protect them or predispose towards disorder in later life only in the presence of later stress events.'

'Stress' is part of the human condition, but it is particularly endemic in areas which we choose to call 'disadvantaged'. If pre-school education can in any way help children and adults cope with stress and its effects this might well turn out to be one of the most

fundamental contributions which pre-school education might make.

While such a conclusion is, at the moment, highly speculative it seems that we can at least claim that the 'social context' of early learning is fundamentally important. But what kind of social context is most conducive to the kind of long-term learning we have described above? What are 'competence' and 'coping' and how do they develop?

At this stage we have to acknowledge that our knowledge is at best rudimentary and we are forced to rely on some of our intuitive judgments. The present author would suggest that answers in the future may well be found in exploring two main avenues. The first is the relationship between the key features identified by Tizard as indicators of good child care (familiarity, responsiveness and attachment) and those features of good 'education' outlined by Donaldson. We have already explored these strands separately and at this stage follow that particular avenue no further than to suggest that one clue to the source of coping and competence in young children may well lie within the relationship between 'familiarity', 'responsiveness', 'attachment' and 'self-awareness' in its many manifestations.

Role of parents and community

The other major avenue to explore is of course that of parent and community involvement in pre-school education. It was the naive optimism of the sixties that concentrated 'input' in the pre-school years would in itself have long-term benefits. Few would now accept that proposition: instead they would emphasise the importance of capitalising on the experiences gained in those pre-school years. Woodhead (1985) uses more theoretical language:

> '... the effect of early intervention on long-term outcomes is also conditional on mediating variables which reinforce and sustain that process'.

In other words, the long-term value of pre-school

experience depends not only on the quality of that experience but on its being sustained both by those responsible for the child outside his pre-school group and subsequently by those who take over responsibility for his education. It is here that we return to the Under-Fives Centre and the role played by parents.

Although children were always central to the Craigroyston philosophy there was of course a commitment beyond them to their parents and to the wider community. It ran on the principle that there was a strong mutual dependence between parent and child which had important educational overtones and that in the broad sense there was also an interdependent relationship between families and the communities of which they were part. In that belief the work of the Centre was firmly rooted in ecological principles, an acceptance that:

> 'human behaviour is explained not only by the biological characteristics of the individual and the influences associated with the immediate setting containing that person but also those external settings that have indirect impact through their effects upon the mental health and general well-being of the individual' (Cochran 1986).

In terms of the present study then, what is being argued is that the education of children cannot be seen in isolation, nor can that of their parents. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two and that in turn is affected for good or ill directly and indirectly by other factors in the community. We have therefore chosen to base this part of the discussion on the ecological model of human development outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

The 'ecological environment'

Bronfenbrenner's position, as briefly as possible, is as follows. Within the boundaries set by heredity, human growth and development depend on the individual's interaction with his 'ecological environment'. That environment has three separate dimensions all related to one another in a 'nesting' structure, like a set of

Russian dolls. At its heart are the 'prime' or immediate settings in which the individual lives most of his life: the home, the school, the workplace. The second dimension is the relationship between these prime settings: this relationship is said to be 'as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting'. Third are the events taking place in settings in which the developing person is not even present but which may impinge upon him: in the case of a young child, for example, his parents' place of employment. Thus, in summary, the individual's 'ecological environment' is made up of 'prime settings', the relationships between these settings, and events taking place in settings which are important to him but in which he plays no active part.

Bronfenbrenner goes further. Within the 'prime settings', the key concept for development is 'interaction', particularly of pairs who are emotionally important to each other, for example, parent and child. The quality of the interaction between these pairs is crucial to the development of both since '... it appears that if one member of the pair undergoes a process of development the other does also'. He also argues that the capacity of a 'pair' to be effective in each other's development depends on the presence and participation of a third party: a spouse, relative, friend or neighbour. Without that, or if the 'third party' plays a disruptive role, the process breaks down: 'like a three-legged stool it is upset if one leg is broken or shorter than the others'. The same is true of settings: they too are more likely to function effectively in the process of human development if there are social interconnections between them. A final important strand in Bronfenbrenner's argument at this stage is his notion that a person's ecological environment is what that individual perceives it to be rather than what the environment 'is' as it is measured by any objective criteria.

What all this adds up to is 'a theory of environmental interconnections and their impact on the forces directly affecting psychological growth'. The study of

human development thus becomes essentially a study of the influences of: first, how individuals act, react and interact within their own immediate 'prime settings'; second, how they change and are changed by these settings; third, how they are affected by the relationships between these settings and by the larger contexts in which these settings are embedded; and finally how they 'see' their own environment.

Development factors

If we follow this model to examine factors relevant to the development of young mothers and their pre-school children, we must conclude that what we should be examining are: first the opportunities which parents and children have to interact, most crucially in the home but also, importantly, in any pre-school group to which the child may belong; second, the links which exist between the home and the group and the mother's place of work or learning (if relevant); third, whether there is a 'third party' available (spouse, friend, extended family) to support the mother and child; fourth, the links between the home, the group and other community settings which may be important to the mother and child – for example, social and health services, schools, voluntary groups; fifth, general community factors which may directly or indirectly affect the quality of the mother/child relationship – for example, housing conditions, transport, play facilities, shopping opportunities; and, finally, how families 'see' their environment.

It would be asking a lot to expect any pre-school centre to contribute to all of these, but it is important to look at the extent to which the Under-Fives Centre operated within the kind of framework which sees these factors as important.

Certainly there was no question that the mother/child relationship was central to the Centre's philosophy and this brought 'home' and 'group' close together. Given too that mothers and children also had their own individual opportunities to develop their own interests, the Centre was exemplifying the point that their mutual relationship was the stronger for the

109

opportunities they had to develop separately as well as together. Again, for those mothers and children who had no obvious 'third party' to support their relationship the Centre often provided this through the help and understanding of the staff. Sometimes too it was through the Centre that other 'third parties' were identified as close personal friendships between mothers developed.

Links between the Centre and other agencies (health, social work, other pre-school groups, primary schools, etc.) were uneven: some were strong, others tenuous, but the network was expanding. Again, while there was no direct link between the work of the Centre and wider community issues such a housing, play facilities, transport, etc. these were the kinds of issues which were beginning to be discussed by those mothers who attended the sociology class and the discussion group within the high school. Finally those mothers who were most strongly committed to the Centre did claim that their involvement there had helped them to 'see' their environment differently: a new-found confidence had helped them see themselves and their children in a new light, and in sharing so much with other mothers they had come to realise how much they had in common with them, and the community itself, disadvantaged though it undoubtedly was, was seen more positively.

There is certainly no suggestion that the Under-Fives Centre had gone as far as it could on any of these dimensions, nor were they equally developed (and we shall return to that later), but at least it can be said that the Centre worked on principles which on this analysis were potentially supportive and conducive to the development of children, mothers and young families.

Capacity to be self-directing

We take Bronfenbrenner's analysis one stage further. One of the key factors in human development, he argues, and one of the marks of growing maturity is the individual's capacity to be 'self-directing': to take his own decisions, to live his own life. However, the capacity to value 'self-direction', and to be self-directing oneself is found more in some sections of

101

society than in others. It is particularly linked to 'social class'. Bronfenbrenner quotes the work of Kohn (1977):

> 'The higher a person's social class position, the greater the likelihood that he will value self-direction both for his children and himself ... The lower a person's social class position, the greater the likelihood that he will value conformity to external authority and that he will believe in following the dictates of authority as the wisest perhaps the only feasible course of action'.

Kohn goes on to suggest that of the three factors normally taken to comprise 'social class' (in the American context), 'occupation', 'education' and 'income' the one by far most strongly linked to the person's commitment to self-direction is education. The hypothesis is:

> 'The further one goes in school, the more likely one would be to experience freedom from close supervision, non-routinised flow, substantively complex work and opportunity for self-direction'.

The argument is that the more one experiences opportunities for self-direction the more one values it for oneself and one's children and the more productive the interaction in the individual's prime settings.

Where all this links to the Under-Fives Centre is that it is at least arguable that those who clearly gained so much from the Centre were those who had experienced or were experiencing education in a new light. For those who attended classes, for example, there was, perhaps for the first time, freedom from close supervision, some 'non-routinised flow' and relatively complex work, all factors conducive to the development of 'self-direction'. That brought enormous personal satisfaction and a new perception of themselves as people.

This is a point perhaps particularly relevant to young

women in disadvantaged areas. There is a growing literature dating from the mid-seventies (Brown *et al* 1975, Richman 1974) on the particularly high levels of stress and neuroticism among working class women with pre-school children, and in the present study we have already remarked on how often stress and poor self-image among women were highlighted by those who worked in the area. We also noted that self-help groups had sprung up to try to combat dependency on tranquiliser drugs. This is of course a highly complex issue with no easy analysis in terms of cause and effect and certainly no easy solution, but some writers (see for example, Hunt 1980) have suggested that it may be at least in part related to the dependency and conformity which may be generated by motherhood: dependency on the male financially and socially, conformity to his timetable, expectations and decisions. In such a context the opportunity to be 'self-directing' in however small a way may be a young mother's lifeline.

This then may give us the main clue to why the Under-Fives Centre meant so much to those who used it regularly. In the best sense it provided critical opportunities for the mother, for the child and for the mother-child relationship to further their own development. While it is probably true that those who attended classes felt this most keenly, it was true of many more if to a lesser degree. Opportunities simply to learn to be 'their own person' and to value themselves as they knew they were valued at the Centre, were the first step along what might be for them a much longer road to 'self-direction'.

Balance of power

Finally, Bronfenbrenner argues that it is crucial to human development that individuals get involved in what he calls 'complex molar activities' (i.e. activities that are deliberately planned and go on over a long period of time) in social settings where the balance of power is favourable to the developing person. In the Under-Fives Centre there was no question that the whole context was well structured, that all activities were thoroughly planned and that parents were

encouraged to be actively involved from start to finish. There was no question that the powerful hand of the professionals was always there, usually unobtrusively in the background, but in the last analysis power lay with the parents since there was never any compulsion on anyone to take part in a given activity or even to attend on a regular basis. While there were many practical problems associated with the Centre's flexibility of approach it may be that ultimately it was the key to its success because it recognised where power lay and what the long-term development of children, parents, families and communities was all about.

Having analysed the psychological principles of pre-school education first in terms of child development and second in terms of ecological theory we now bring the two strands of the analysis together. What is the link between the two?

Mediating variables

Earlier in this chapter we concluded that pre-school education is most likely to be effective by influencing motivation, self-concept and confidence in children but that (to quote Woodhead again):

> '... the effect of early intervention on long-term outcomes is also conditional on mediating variables which reinforce and sustain that process'.

We would suggest that the 'mediating variables' are those features of the ecological environment described by Bronfenbrenner. They are the critical factors in the long-term. In other words, pre-school education even of the traditionally 'best' kind can only be effective if it also takes account of: opportunities for 'self-direction' in both children and mothers; links with other pre-school and community agencies; the total context in which young families lead their lives; the next educational stage to which children with their parents will progress.

This last point is a crucial one. There is no suggestion that the nursery schools or certainly the primary

schools to which Under-Fives children and their parents will progress should operate in the same way as the Centre itself. That would be both impractical and unwise since there has to be a 'weaning away' process. But unless the same principles are accepted then the effects of the Centre may be largely lost. The 'process' of the Under-Fives Centre must continue to be 'reinforced' if its effects are to be 'sustained'. This is a huge task but one which must be taken seriously by everyone concerned.

In conclusion, then it will be clear that we are reflecting a very positive image of the Under-Fives Centre at this stage of its development. We are not claiming that there are not important questions to be asked, nor are we pretending that the practice of the Under-Fives Centre is always successful, that there is not failure and frustration as well as success and satisfaction nor that the 'principles' which we have identified are unfailingly evident in practice. That would be unrealistic. What we are claiming is that the principles on which the Centre is based are sound, that the approach is innovatory, that the practice is often exciting – and that in a fundamental sense, people care.

What then are the 'important questions' which need to be raised? We highlight two: one which we would raise ourselves, the other a question which seems to encapsulate the few serious criticisms which others made of the Centre

Continuity

Our own question concerns continuity. We have already alluded to this several times but it is because we see it as central: continuity within the Centre itself as well as continuity between the work of the Centre, primary schools and the high school itself.

The question of continuity in the Centre revolves round the spasmodic attendance of children and parents and the high turnover of families. We have already seen that any lack of continuity here is the price paid for the flexibility, lack of 'rules', and the acknowledgement of the basic principle that the power

105

to make decisions about the nature of her involvement with the Centre lies with the parent. In our terms it is a price well worth paying in the context of the Under-Fives Centre but its corollary must be that parents should be encouraged (as they are) to build in continuity through regular patterns of attendance as they see appropriate. Equally, it is crucially important that there should be continuity in terms of the permanent staff. This does exist at the moment, but with the many opportunities now being aired for the Centre to develop, it is easy to see the danger of the staff being pulled in so many directions that the fundamental continuity which they provide is lost. If 'outreach' work, links with nursery and primary schools, etc. are to be taken seriously then staffing may need to be increased.

Our conclusion then is, for all the reasons outlined above, that links between the Centre and nursery and primary schools need to be strengthened. Equally, the Centre must be and must be seen to be an integral part of the work of the high school. A total and sustained educational environment for families depends on all sectors working together as part of the same continuous process.

Our approach has, of course, been psychologically-based and it has emphasised the development of individual children, parents and families. Certainly not everyone would agree with that analysis nor the premises upon which it is built. For example those whose developmental theory is genetically-based and whose fundamental premise is that 'behaviour develops in a patterned and highly predictable way and can be evaluated by means of simple, basic test situations' (Ames *et al* 1980) would dismiss its strongly environmental and interactive emphasis. Equally those who take a more sociologically-based perspective would probably argue that its emphasis on individual or family development is inappropriate. Community schools and those associated with them, they would argue, should be more concerned with identifying disadvantaged groups and reaching out to them. The

task as they see it is not to help individuals out of disadvantage but to eradicate disadvantage itself. The ultimate aim of an educational service is to help a community set its own priorities and increasingly take responsibility for itself.

Classic dilemma

This is the other 'important question' which we would highlight: how to accommodate both the individually-oriented psychological interactive emphasis based largely on a traditional model of professional teaching alongside the more radical, outreaching, group and community emphasis which others would want. There is an uneasy tension between the two which the present author shares. Can we have both without compromising either? That is the classic dilemma of those who work in disadvantaged areas through the medium of state schools.

Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre illustrates the dilemma very well. For example, we noted earlier examples of where individuals who had found interests and self-confidence through their involvement in the Centre had then become committed to working on behalf of the community, but it is also true that it was relatively common for Under-Fives mothers who lived in the vicinity of the school to talk of sending their children to primary schools outside the area, thereby implicitly rejecting their 'community'. Again while there was no question that many users of the Centre had learned to take their own initiatives and many contributed a lot to the life of the Centre, it was still true that its major activities were fairly heavily dependent on professional leadership although that leadership was often unobtrusive and the relationships it encouraged were always informl and easy.

There is another interesting facet of this dilemma in Craigroyston and it comes from the Centre's base being in a secondary school. That has all kinds of advantages which we would not want to minimise but it also produces a potential problem. Given that most of the staff in the high school have no pretensions to understanding in any fundamental sense what the

education of young children is about, there is a temptation for them to want the Under-Fives Centre to be a main focus for the school's outreach programme: the Centre staff, on the other hand, would put their emphasis on individual children and families which is where their professional roots lie. We would not want to exaggerate this distinction: it is merely one of emphasis but it is certainly there. Ironically too, if the Centre builds up its links with other nursery schools and primary schools its problem there will be exactly the opposite: how to convince at least some of them that outreach work and a community focus are an integral part of the education of young children.

There is no easy answer to these dilemmas, but the present author believes that the Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre, if it recognises the tensions and the reasons for them, is in an excellent position to contribute to our understanding of how they might be resolved. The reason for this is simply that it has a staff of exceptional ability and now six years of hard-won experience. What is probably necessary is a greater commitment on the part of the Under-Fives staff to working with community education staff both in and outside the school on behalf of community groups; at the same time there must also be a greater commitment on the party of community and high school staff to understanding the 'individual orientation' of the Centre. In many ways, of course, this tension is reflected at every level of the school system in deprived areas. The excitement and potential of a partnership between community education and 'under-fives' is that the latter is not constrained by the many regulations and expectations that confound change in the compulsory sector.

Major contribution

Despite all the problems and dilemmas then, on our analysis Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is making a major contribution to the development of children, parents and families in the area and this has cumulative benefits for the school as a whole and the community itself. Beyond that, the present author sees the Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre as also having the

potential to contribute on a wider front to our understanding of two key contemporary issues in education. The first is the one outlined above: the tension between the 'individual' and 'community' focus of education in deprived areas. The second is the nature of pre-school education. As we pointed out earlier, at the heart of the Under-Fives Centre is a traditional model of nursery education, adapted and elaborated in term of 'family education'.

There is in Scotland in the 1980s a very strong impetus towards rethinking pre-school education in the context of what communities are about and what they want of an educational service. The most radical rethinking to date along these lines has come from Strathclyde Region (SRC 1984). The Under-Fives Centre in Craigroyston High School is uniquely placed to contribute to what will be a long-term debate about the community role of pre-school education in general and nursery education in particular. That is an exciting if daunting task and one which Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is well capable of tackling.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be clear from the discussion of the preceding chapter that the present author sees a very strong case for continuing support for the Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre. It is in a unique position to contribute not only to the practical concerns of the immediate Craigroyston community, but to the thinking of wider groups concerned with the development of community schools and pre-school education. It is within that general positive framework that this final chapter draws together some of the main practical and theoretical issues and looks at their implications for the future development of the Centre itself. It concludes by looking briefly at how the Craigroyston experience might be used in planning similar provision elsewhere.

The building and facilities

The playroom itself and the outdoor play area are well equipped and, in terms of space, quite adequate for most activities related to children's play. Certainly the best use is made of the facilities as they exist. However, four aspects of the physical accommodation need to be looked at.

First, the playroom is not entirely suitable for very young children (certainly under 1½) partly because of its size and partly because of the constant 'busyness' of older children. This is a particular problem when the parent is absent. The staff recognise this and have tried to encourage mothers with very young children simply to 'drop in' for a short time and remain with their children at times when they know the Centre will be quiet. However this is not an adequate long-term answer. There is a need for a small room which could be set aside for babies and young toddlers and even then the numbers should be kept small.

Second, linked to the first point, the toilet/washing accommodation is inadequate, particularly for the younger children but even for the older ones. Both the facilities themselves and their location leave much to be desired.

Third, there is a need for more adequate storage accommodation.

Finally, there is a pressing need for some adult privacy. The parents' room is ideal for informal chat and small group meetings, but there is nowhere to which staff or parents can retreat for a private discussion or even a few minutes alone. In a setting where stress and severe personal problems are an intrinsic part of daily living, it is very important that this kind of facility should be available.

Users: Children

The length and pattern of attendance that suits each child and family is always an individual matter and it should be worked out by trial, error and negotiation. However, two age-groups raise particular questions. First, as already indicated (above), given present accommodation and facilities, the Centre cannot easily provide for babies and young toddlers. Second, at the other end of the age-range, it is important to look closely at the pattern of attendance of 'rising fives'. Again, there is no one right answer and the Under-Fives Centre may be entirely right for some, but for others, particularly if they have attended over a period of years it may not, despite its efforts, be able to provide as much as they need. In some cases there may come a point where the mother's need to identify with the Centre through the child may have to take second place to the child's need for new experiences and wider horizons.

It is also important to look at the pattern of attendance of children particularly those over three. While the principle of flexibility and choice is fundamental (see Chapter 4) it is also important that parents should be persuaded of the importance of giving children as far as possible a regular pattern of attendance and the educational continuity which comes from a sense of security and predictability in their pre-school experiences.

Finally, however, on the positive side, it is important to note that the Under-Fives Centre is providing

111

something almost unique (certainly in its scope) for children around the age of two plus and their mothers. This is a stage where children are learning so much, where they are making great demands on adults, where there is both huge potential and huge frustration – and very little community support. Educational provision, in the broad sense, for children and their parents at this stage may well be one of the major gaps in our provision.

It is very important that the 'Under-Fives' Centre remains just that and that there are flexible opportunities for every age group. Getting the balance right for the individual child and for the Centre as a whole involves a lot of judgment, insight and skill. It must involve staff and parents together.

Parents

It is clear that parent users of the Centre are almost exclusively mothers. It is probably inevitable that the majority will always be mothers but it is at the very least regrettable that there are so few fathers around. This is not the place to debate the likely influence of two possibly contradictory factors relating to the father's role in child care in areas such as Craigroyston: on the one hand the social class and cultural constraints on men playing a public role in child care, on the other the high numbers of unemployed men with time on their hands. Difficult though it may be to persuade men to become involved publicly with their pre-school children it is plainly important, and it may well be that this should be one of the major priorities for the future. Like other developments, however, it should come in its own time and in its own way. It may well come through the development of 'family sessions' already being considered for the school as a whole, or perhaps more particularly through practical activities such as outings where men might have a specific role to play.

Teenage mothers

In the same way, it is worth considering whether the Centre could do more to attract a larger number of teenage mothers. There is an obvious need here but at least three factors should be considered carefully

112

before this is seen as a priority area for development. First there is a limit to how much one centre can do and it has to be recognised that no one type of provision is right for everyone. Second, teenagers for a variety of legitimate reasons often need 'space' from their recent experience of school. Third, the particular needs of teenage mothers have been recognised by other organisations in the area and it may be more appropriate for the Under-Fives Centre to give indirect support to them rather than take direct responsibility itself. On the other hand, it is clear from talking to some of the 'guidance' staff in the school that they and others maintain very strong relationships with some ex-school students who even as young mothers or fathers want to retain some form of identity with the school. For them, links with the Under-Fives Centre may provide a natural and productive focus in the school both for their children and for themselves.

Turning now to the actual mothers who used the Centre, it is important to consider whether its 'image' as being used predominantly by those who live outwith the area is justified. In the earliest days the users of the Centre came almost exclusively from the area itself because the first contacts were made through local pre-school groups and by home visiting. However, as the opportunities offered by the school became known further afield, the Centre did attract a considerable number from outwith the area who wanted to take advantage of school classes. It is the image of this latter group which has persisted, but on our evidence, increasingly, it has become less accurate as the image of the Centre's users as a whole partly because many in this group have now moved on and partly because the role of the Centre has diversified.

Changing function

What is probably true is that the role of the Centre as a place to leave children for parents to attend classes attracted those whose primary motivation was the classes themselves, who needed no external encouragement and who saw the quality of the Centre itself largely as an added 'bonus'. More recently the Centre has attracted those whose motivation was

013

unspecified, even unconscious, some who would never attend classes, others who would only 'learn' to want classes through preliminary experience of the Centre itself. In short, where the Centre's original function was an instrumental one, making attendance at classes possible, increasingly it has acted as part of an educational process in which school classes might or might not be a further stage. This changing function is reflected in a changing clientele. At the same time it is still true that a large proportion of Under-Fives users who attend classes do come from outside the immediate area. Partly because, as we have seen (Chapter 2), it is those who attend classes who are the most regular users of the Centre, and partly because they are the most 'visible' users of the Centre in the school as a whole, it is they who reflect its image. It is not an accurate image of Centre users as a total group, but it is an image perpetuated by the dominance of a key group of mothers and reflected for example in the recent video of the Centre.

Finally we turn, briefly, to the very large group of users who 'drop in' perhaps once or twice but never return. In some cases they may simply not want what the Centre offers, in other cases it may well be that they need a personal, individual support which even the Under-Fives Centre with all the efforts it makes cannot offer. Some are brought once by a health visitor or social worker but that is probably not enough. It is particularly noticeable that many single parents come once or twice and don't return, but conversely a high proportion of single parents are also among the most regular users. Presumably we see here a reflection both of the initial difficulty and the potential satisfaction which single parents can experience at the Centre. Clearly there is here a role for someone who could take particular responsibility for introducing and supporting new parents in their first weeks at the Centre. This point has in fact been accepted in principle, but scarcity of resources has meant that the para-professional recently appointed has had to be given the more general responsibility of supporting all adult students who attend the school. It is to be hoped

that introducing and supporting new parents particularly single parents in the Under-Fives Centre could be at least part of that remit.

The programme

The programme of the Under-Fives Centre is based on three principles. First it is firmly rooted in the traditional child-centred curriculum of nursery education; second, it is moving explicitly but gradually towards a model of family education which recognises and tries to reconcile the needs of children, of parents and of children and parents together; third, the development of the programme has been relatively slow – it has grown out of experience and perceived need. The working out of the programme has not been unproblematic but most agree that in the main the Centre's programme objectives have been met. There are two queries: first, whether the programme is too much Centre-based and not sufficiently concerned or resourced to provide more 'outreach' to the community itself; second, whether the programme should be extended beyond the conventional school year particularly over the summer holiday. There is certainly a case to be made for both these possible developments but if they are to come they should develop as part of the natural evolution of the Centre and as the result of widely-based discussions (see below).

Size and scope, structure and flexibility

Development in any direction raises questions about optimum size and priorities and about the balance between structure and flexibility. To take the last point first, there can be little doubt that part of the success of the Centre has been that it operates within a total school ethos which encourages flexibility and creative risk-taking within recognised boundaries. Within that setting it has developed its own initiatives within an implicit structure which brings predictability and security and allows the Centre's objectives to be met. At the same time it allows rules and regulations to be kept to a minimum, there is no overt pressure on families to conform and new activities can always be considered. It is no mean task to achieve this kind of balance: it is part of the professionalism of the staff.

Questions of flexibility lead to questions of size and scope since flexibility brings its own risks. Flexibility of attendance, for example, could result in unmanageable numbers if the 'pool' of users is too large, and too much diversification of purpose could lead to a loss of identity. When one looks at a successful venture it is always tempting to suggest ways in which it might expand. In the case of the Under-Fives Centre this must be watched carefully as there can be little doubt that its success owes much to the fact that it is still possible for a small group of staff working together in a limited setting to know every family and every member of that family by name however spasmodic their attendance. Those who in the present study thought of the Centre as 'home' would be unlikely to feel that way if the 'family' had ever forgotten who they were.

School students

The point has already been made several times that the involvement of school students is, for a variety of reasons, probably one of the weakest features of the Centre and one which needs rethinking. Strategies for consideration might be:

a) making work at the Centre open to school students of all levels of ability

b) asking regular users of the Centre to 'adopt' a school student, letting him/her get to know the family as a whole as well as the child in the context of the Centre;

c) planning a variety of specific practical tasks in relation to young children both in and outside the Centre so that students completing them will feel a sense of personal achievement.

Links with other pre-school groups

Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is part of a wide network of pre-school provision in the area, and one of the priorities in the next stage of development should be to establish clearly understood relationships within that network. This process is already begun with the establishment of the mini CFUF. Linking with other groups is particularly important for the Under-Fives

Centre since some of its children will also be using other forms of provision. The most common reason for this 'double attendance' is that once their children reach three plus, many parents want them to attend nursery classes as 'preparation' for school, but at the same time they want to retain their relationship with the Centre either for their own practical purposes in attending classes or simply because both parent and child have established a personal identity with the Centre. The present author is somewhat uneasy about 'double attendance' but accepts that for many it seems to 'work'. Three factors, however, seem to be important. First, it should be clear that one of the forms of provision is the 'main' focus for the child. Second, the two should be compatible, the same broad principles and beliefs relating to the care and education of young children operating in both. Third, as far as possible, each should know about the other and some attempt, however small, should be made to relate the child's (and parent's) experience in the two forms of provision.

The Under-Fives Centre and schools

The link between pre-school and school education is vital. While the Under-Fives Centre's base in a secondary school tends to identify it with that sector, it is essential that links with primary schools should be forged. That is no easy task for all kinds of reasons, not least those related to different priorities and different approaches to the education of young children. Resolving some of these differences is a matter not simply for individual groups or schools but also for those at a higher level responsible for the development of early education as a whole.

As far as links with the high school are concerned, it was of course part of the original concept that the Under-Fives Centre should be an integral part of the community school. That principle has never been queried either by the Under-Fives staff and parents or by the great majority of secondary school staff. The present research showed (Chapter 3) that the Centre was certainly perceived as an important element in the community school but it also identified three main

417

factors which led to its being seen in some senses as apart and different.

First, the Under-Fives Centre was seen by some as 'protected' and 'insulated' in a way the rest of the school was not. Some of this feeling, it seemed, related to the fact that in contrast to all other adult activities, no payment was required for use of the Under-Fives Centre (although Under-Fives parents of course paid for other activities in the same way as everyone else), and it probably also related to the Under-Fives Centre being a particular focus for the interests of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. However, there were other reasons. One was the image of pre-school education as a 'soft option' in an area where the pressures and stress of working with teenagers were considerable. To believe this was to misunderstand the nature of pre-school education and to underestimate seriously the continuing strain involved in working with families, however young, under stress. Until the functions and processes involved in the Under-Fives Centre are better understood by the majority of staff, there is little chance of it being an integral part of the community school in any fundamental sense.

Second, it may be that the image of the Centre as 'insular' relates in part to changes in its 'policy-making' structure over the years. While the original working party was composed entirely of school staff, by 1985 it was composed entirely of Centre parents and staff. While moves in this general direction are obviously to be applauded, it may be that they have gone too far and there is some need to redress the balance. It may also be that the Under-Fives Centre has some responsibility to ensure that its links and relationships with other school-based groups are mutually understood and mutually supportive.

Third, and most important, is the different ideological perceptions of 'community schooling' already referred to in Chapter 4. For a minority of school staff the priority of any section of a school which calls itself a 'community school' is a programme of 'outreach'; for

other staff, including those in the Under-Fives Centre, that comes second to meeting the needs of individual children and families and the internal aims of the institution itself. In that sense the Under-Fives Centre is at the moment part of the community school on what some would see as a limited definition of what a community school is.

As we see it, the issue of how to relate respectively to primary schools and to the high school poses completely different problems. In the primary schools it is how to sustain the parent and community focus developed in the pre-school years: in the high school it is how to develop the adult links within the school without moving from the central principle that an under-fives centre is essentially about the needs of children.

The Under-Fives Centre as a model for the future

Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre represents one of the many alternative forms of pre-school provision all offering their own emphasis and priorities to meet different kinds of needs. As a centre it is itself unique and offers no blueprint. Nevertheless it shows clearly the potential of under-fives provision in a community-based secondary school and has much to offer those planning similar provision in disadvantaged areas. The main points which it can offer from its experience are:

a) an under-fives centre should develop according to the needs of its own community and in the light of existing provision;

b) it should develop at its own pace and in the light of its own experience;

c) it should establish itself from the beginning as part of a pre-school network linked to primary schools in the area;

d) it should be professionally run with para-professional help and staff should be of a high calibre and with a strong commitment to encouraging users to take responsibility themselves;

119

e) flexibility of attendance should be possible but there should be a structure to the programme with clear aims and objectives, and parents should be encouraged to attend with their children on a regular basis;

f) rules and regulations should be minimal and there should be no overt pressure on families to conform;

g) there should be a continuing analysis of the relative needs of children, of parents, and of children and parents together;

h) there should be a regular programme of 'key activities' as well as opportunities for informal 'dropping in';

i) it is important to establish a 'core group' of users;

j) links with school students are important but have to be carefully monitored;

k) many users will need continuing support and encouragement;

l) an under-fives centre is unlikely to be successful in any secondary school – it must be a school committed to promoting the principles of community schooling and pre-school education and ready to see its under-fives centre as an integral part of the overall aims and policy of the school.

Summary of main policy recommendations

A) Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is a rare example of where the education of pre-school children and their parents separately and together has been provided successfully within one institution. In its relatively brief existence it has established a solid foundation of experience on which it has yet much to build. In terms of its contribution to its own community, to Craigroyston High School and more widely to educational thinking about both community and pre-school education, it is an establishment with

which Lothian Region should be well satisfied and which it would be very much in its own interests to continue to support.

B) The accommodation and facilities available in the Under-Fives Centre should be examined to see where it might be possible to 'improve': 1) provision for children aged 1½ or under; 2) toilet and washing facilities; 3) storage facilities; 4) opportunities for privacy for adults.

C) While the Under-Fives Centre should in principle be open to parents with children of every age under five, particularly close scrutiny should be given to its appropriateness for children under 1½ (and numbers should be minimal) and those raising fives who have attended for some time. On the other hand, the Centre has highlighted again the enormous social need for provision for young mothers with children of two plus. More specifically it has shown the educational potential of working with mothers and children at this stage. This is a point which could, perhaps, be raised more generally.

D) While it is entirely right that it should be parents who decide how often they and their children will attend the Centre, some continuity is essential for children. This issue must be discussed with parents (as it is) and there must be continuity of staff. Given that there are growing demands on staff time this balance must be monitored carefully.

E) The decision to ensure that the Under-Fives Centre was professionally run was a wise one. The quality of its educational leadership has been part of the key to its success. It is, however, part of that professionalism that it should in the next stage encourage users to take more responsibility themselves for the development of the Centre's activities.

F) In the next stage, attention should be given to how Under-Fives staff and users might work in collaboration with community education staff towards an expanding outreach programme.

G) While accepting the predominance of mothers as carers of pre-school children, the Under-Fives Centre should in the next stage make a deliberate effort to look at 'family education' and the role within that of the father.

H) The relationship between the Under-Fives Centre and school students is an important one and needs some rethinking. While giving school students experience of young children and families should probably always be the priority, there is also a case to be made for joint activities, e.g. discussion sessions, involving older school students and Under-Fives parents together.

I) Many parents will not continue to use the Centre without continuing personal support and encouragement. Consideration should be given to the appointment of a para-professional to fulfil this function.

J) Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre is part of a pre-school network and has itself been instrumental in strengthening that network by initiating a 'mini CFUF' in the area. However much remains to be done to make the Centre more widely known within the network and to create links with other pre-school groups particularly where children attending the Centre are also involved in another group. Under-Fives parents themselves might take the initiative here perhaps through the use of the recently completed video.

K) Links with primary school are crucial, partly because it is in the nearby primary schools that all other 'nursery' education is provided (see J above). It is also very important, however, that there should be a growing dialogue between the

pre-school and the compulsory sectors on how family and community factors should be used to promote the education of young children. Continuity is essential. The responsibility for this 'dialogue' goes well beyond those immediately responsible for individual groups and schools.

L) The Under-Fives Centre has shown the potential of a pre-school/family facility within a secondary school, not only because it offers practical educational opportunities and facilities for both children and parents, but also because it offers a wide variety of human resources. At the same time a pre-school centre can itself provide an 'educational resource' for the school not only in terms of school students but also because it can provide a leavening influence in an institution dominated by the interests, concerns and problems of adolescents. It is an experiment which might be repeated but with caution and only if two major considerations are met: first that the basic principles of pre-school education are accepted by all staff, and the education of young children is seen as being just as important as the education of secondary school students; second, that the secondary school itself operates on the principles of community schooling.

And finally:

In one of the early minutes of the original working party, concern was expressed that Craigroyston Under-Fives Centre had to find a way to be innovatory and that would not be easy. As we saw from the comments in our opening paragraph, as an innovation it has provoked many different reactions for reasons we have tried to explain. But innovatory and exciting it certainly has been. It wasn't easy – but it happened. It has been no mean feat.

APPENDICES

The five appendices attached to the original report have not been reproduced here for space reasons. The titles and contents are listed below and any reader interested in receiving copies of any or all of them may apply to the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Appendix A: The children and their parents
Contains ten tables and a chart which give details of housing area; ages of children attending the Centre; average attendances at Centre; length of time attended; which adults bring the children to the Centre; numbers of children from two-parent and one-parent families; initial reasons for adults coming to the Centre; regularity of adults' attendance at a number of different activities; numbers attending the Centre over a five-month period in 1985.

Appendix B: Patterns of attendance (example of one week)

Appendix C(1): Patterns of adult involvement – instructions for completing Form C2

Appendix C(2): Patterns of adult involvement – findings from the completed forms

Appendix D: Questionnaire to High School staff

Appendix E: Individual interviews
Lists the persons interviewed in the course of the evaluation research

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'Case studies are never finished, only left' (Walker 1980). They are portrayals of situations bounded by their own unique circumstances in time. Despite the implication that case studies are essentially about the 'past' or a very temporary 'present', those like the one presented in this paper should have the potential to reach out to the future since they may identify issues which readers will recognise in a different form in their own context. Certainly, it is hoped that those involved in the provision of early childhood care and education will have recognised some issues relevant to their own thinking and future work.

For those with a particular interest in the evaluation of community-based projects there are also two methodological questions which caused me some concern and which, at this stage, I now want to share. This is a 'postscript', not a 'postmortem', so the questions are simply stated and left for the reader to consider.

First, in any study which has a clear community orientation, can one assume that 'community' perspectives, 'community' concerns are reflected in the cumulative experience of individuals? In the Craigroyston study, I based my interpretation largely on the experience of talking with individuals although some group observation was also involved. I suspect that was not enough.

Second, one has to ask how legitimate it is to claim to pursue a democratic style of evaluation within a setting which is essentially bureaucratic and hierarchical (Walker 1980). Schools, even community schools, are hierarchical and accountable within a bureaucratic system and this is inevitably reflected in the consultation and negotiating processes of any evaluation which is linked to schools. But is it 'inevitable'? Are there other strategies which could make the evaluation of projects like Craigroyston's Under-Fives Centre more democratic? Are there ways in which the wider groups of participants in the action

could be more genuinely part of the evaluation process itself?

I do not see these problems as fundamental flaws in the Craigroyston evaluation, rather dilemmas which others involved in similar work must face. At the end of the first chapter of Part I of this paper, I suggested that it was unrealistic to expect too much of evaluation and that one of its main purposes might be simply to contribute to the discussion of issues. That is not a modest aim, especially when the potential number involved exists on the scale represented by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. For, in the last resort, what matters is not the findings of any particular evaluation but how we can share our evaluation experiences towards the goal of making better provision for young children and their families throughout the world.

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The first in a series of Occasional Papers addressing issues of major importance to policy-makers, practitioners and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children. Published January 1987 in English.

Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives by Glen Nimnicht and Marta Arango with Lydia Hearn
The second Occasional Paper reviews conventional, institution-based approaches to the care and education of young children in disadvantaged societies and proposes the development of alternative, low-cost strategies which take account of family and community resources and involvement as the starting point for such programmes. Published April 1987 in English.

Children at the Margin: a challenge for parents, community and professionals
Summary report and conclusions of the Third Eastern Hemisphere Seminar held in Newcastle, Australia in November 1987. Published February 1988 in English.

The Parent as Prime Educator: Changing Patterns of Parenthood
Summary report and conclusions of the Fourth Western Hemisphere Seminar held in Lima, Peru in May 1986. Published September 1986 in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Newsletter
Published quarterly (January, April, July, October) in English

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Current Programme
Contains brief descriptions of major projects supported by the Foundation. Published annually in English.

Alternatives in Early Childhood Care and Education: Report of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1984-1985
The Foundation's first Biennial Report provides a succinct account of the Foundation's work during 1984 and 1985. The 80 page report includes feature articles on six projects in Kenya, Malaysia, Israel, The Netherlands, Sweden and Peru. Published November 1986 in English.

The work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation/La labor de la Fundación Bernard van Leer
An introductory leaflet about the aims and work of the Foundation. Published May 1987 in English and Spanish.

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139

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(continued from inside front cover)

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